

MAY 2019

AUSTRALIA

PLAYBOY

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THE HOLLYWOOD
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THE INTERVIEW

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PROFESSOR AND POET
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Love or Lust?

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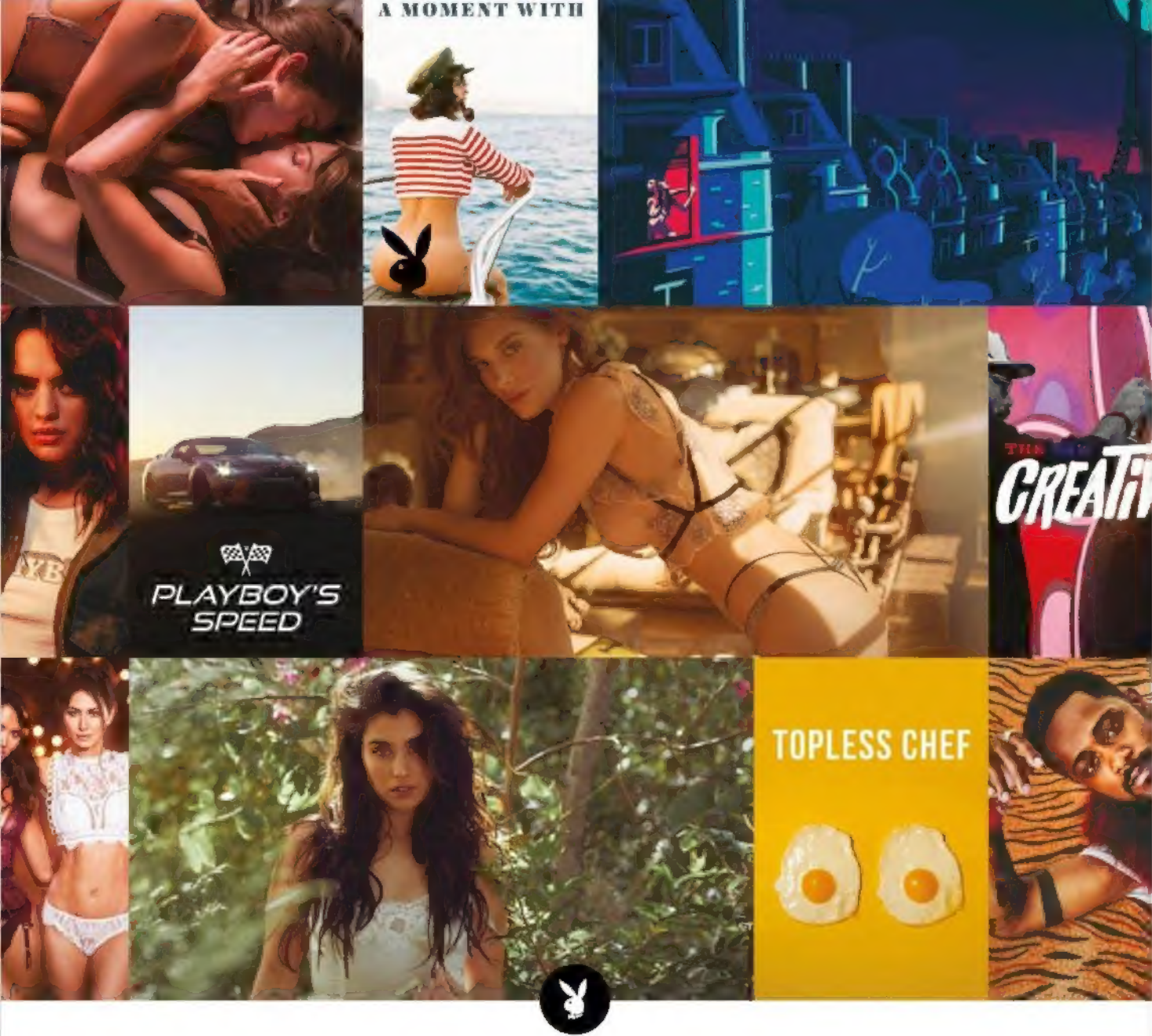


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GIL MACIAS

We sent PLAYBOY's own managing editor to dine with Frank Grillo for this issue's style feature. Despite his familiarity with Grillo's career, Macias, a longtime entertainment writer who specializes in pop culture, superheroes, cosplay and "all things geeky," was struck by the action star's depth. "I expected to discuss fight culture but was blown away by how wise and layered he is," says the 13-year PLAYBOY veteran. "It was cool to witness those layers peel back."



VIRGINIA HEFFERNAN

Who better to further dialogue on the country's hottest-button issues than a pair of not-always-aligned cultural critics? In this installment of the Playboy Interview, Heffernan — a Wired contributing editor, Los Angeles Times columnist and co-host of Slate's Trumppcast — dives deep with Proof of Collusion author Seth Abramson into bipartisan politics, literary tweeting and, of course, Kremlin collusion.



Brian B. Hayes

An internationally renowned photographer whose work is published worldwide, Brian has a wide range of shooting styles and has photographed covers and spreads for magazines such as Maxim, FHM, Vogue, Men's Health, GQ, Esquire, and many more. Brian started the Swimwear Network International Calendar "SNI".



Luis Gomez

An internationally renowned photographer, producer, editor, videographer and musician, whose work is published worldwide, Luis Gomez is known as a guitar player and exclusive artist signed by Gibson guitars and producer and filmmaker. Luis Gomez is the CEO of Universe 137 Studios And Chicas Universe 137 working with more than 40 magazines.

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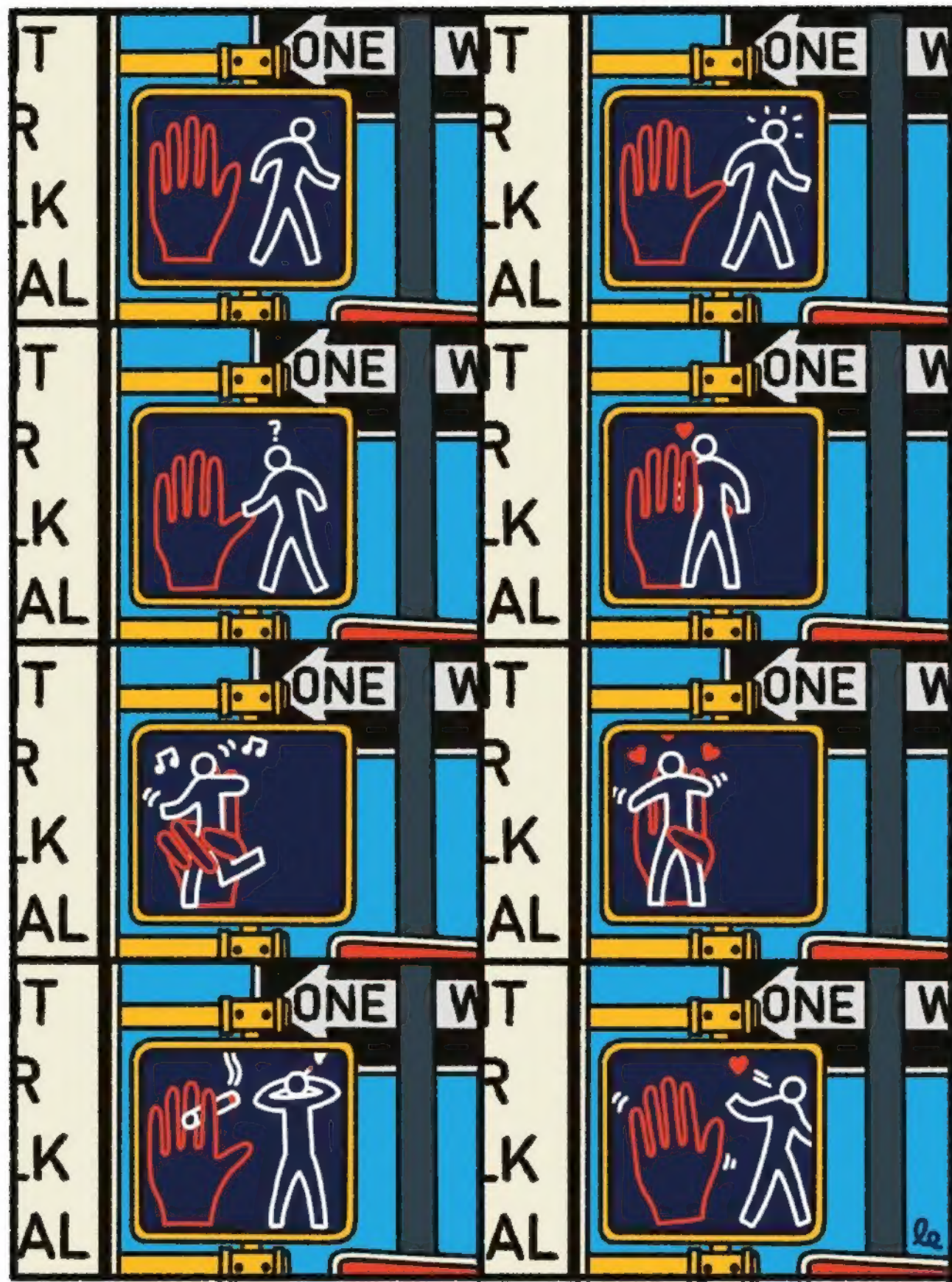
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The tough-as-nails actor suits up; Tyler Durden vibes and hard-won insights on manhood abound

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Marina Grace, Photography by Arthur St. John No 17 May 2019

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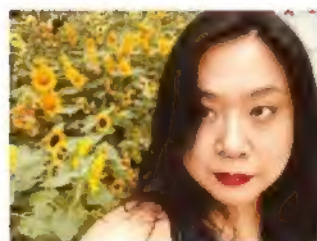
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With America furiously debating the parameters of free speech, we wanted this issue, including the visuals that introduce it, to reflect expression without limitation. To bring that concept to life, we tapped 25-year-old photographer Kelia Anne, among PLAYBOY's youngest cover artists to date. Kelia Anne's surreal, colorful world, starring a preserved butterfly perched on the tip of model Jesi Le Rae's tongue, is at once inviting and startling, nostalgic and fresh. These tensions make for an arresting image while capturing the complexities of silence and speech. "I envisioned a scenario in which voices are expressed visually, as sweet and fragile, and silence is on the cusp of being broken," says Kelia Anne. "I also considered the false negative implications associated with breaking it." The intimate shoot was rife with special moments: "At one point, Jesi was balancing the butterfly on her mouth, and her breathing was moving the wings. Everyone on set was in awe. Balancing a butterfly on your tongue is no easy feat."



FINE LINES

Myriad artists have reimagined Vampirella since Trina Robbins, using Playboy model and longtime employee Barbara Leigh as her muse, drew the now-iconic heroine into the comicsphere in 1969. Award-winning illustrator Joyce Chin conjures the latest Vampi for Make Up to Break Up, an exclusive installment penned by Gail Simone. "I love her fearlessness," says Chin of the character. "She has always been unapologetic about her physicality, her sexuality and how she moves through the world."



2019 BUNNY BOWL

Day drinking, anyone? Our Rabbit celebrated Super Bowl LIII with the Bunny Bowl, a special edition of LAVO Party Brunch in Las Vegas, where football fans joined Playmates Gia Marie, Stephanie Branton, Ashley Doris and Carly Lauren for drinks, eats and touchdown-worthy tunes by DJ Lema.



THAT'S A RAP

You'd expect setting up a tête-à-tête between two of the world's most famous rappers to be complicated, but getting Travis Scott and Nas in the same room was surprisingly easy. In fact, the biggest challenge was getting them to stop: The two were going so deep during the Q&A for *Rapper's Delight*, they had to be interrupted so we could begin Scott's photo shoot. Above, a candid snap from that afternoon.



FUN IN THE PACSUN

As September 2012 Playmate Alana Campos makes clear, Playboy's spring/summer 2019 collaboration with PacSun takes ath leisure to new levels of luxury. The collection features classic silhouettes, gold metallic details and plenty of pointy-eared cameos. pacsun.com/pacsun-collections/

2019 PLAYBOY JAZZ FESTIVAL PREVIEW



ANGÉLIQUE KIDJO Since performing at 2013's Jazz Fest, the Benin-born artist has picked up two Grammys, accepted Amnesty International's 2016 Ambassador of Conscience Award and released a front-to-back reinterpretation of the Talking Heads' *Remain in Light*. It's hard to overstate her importance in world music and harder still to render in words the lifeaffirming experience of seeing her live.

MACEO PARKER BIG BAND An indispensable part of James Brown's best years who has also played with the likes of Parliament-Funkadelic and Prince, Parker is an artist whose saxophone work resides deep in our collective consciousness. He brings to Jazz Fest his Big Band, which backed him on last year's ebullient longplayer *It's All About Love*.



DONNY MCCASLIN *Blackstar*, the album David Bowie released just days before his death, features the haunting tracery of this Santa Cruz-bred saxophonist. For McCaslin's 2018 album *Blow*, he kept alive the Starman's instinctual approach; the result is wild and restrained and much in between, but pulsingly alive throughout.

SONA JOBARTEH The kora, a 21-string instrument developed among a handful of West African griot families, remains underappreciated in the U.S., despite cameos in the works of Taj Mahal, Herbie Hancock, Björk and others. Jobarteh brings a special intensity to her performances, in part because she's the first major female kora artist, but the diamond precision of her technique and voice is the main attraction.



MICHAEL MAYO This Los Angeles native, still in his mid-20s, needs nothing more than his voice to stop you dead in your tracks — not just because his sorcerer-like facility with a loop pedal evokes hypnotic works such as Kanye West's "Ultralight Beam" and Imogen Heap's "Hide and Seek," but because he possesses a vocal purity that comes along only a few times per generation.

The 41st Annual Playboy Jazz Festival returns to the Hollywood Bowl June 8 and 9. Tickets: hollywoodbowl.com/playbojjazz/

BY ERIC SPITZNAGEL

THE NEW BOOB TUBE

Game of Thrones, which kicks off its final season on HBO this spring, redefined the TV sex scene. Sex and nudity on television aren't going anywhere—but they will need to evolve

When *Game of Thrones* debuts its eighth and final season on April 14, one thing will be glaringly apparent to longtime fans: There aren't nearly as many naked prostitutes in Westeros anymore.

This is particularly disappointing to Samantha Bentley, who has played three different ladies of the night over several seasons of HBO's 47-time Emmy-winning series. "I was hoping maybe they'd have me back one more time before it ends," she says wistfully. "But it doesn't look like that's going to happen. It's a different show now."

By "different," she means, of course, less nude. Exposed flesh on *Game of Thrones* has dropped by a staggering 81.8 percent from season one to season seven. This is a pretty dramatic shift for a show that actor Ian McShane, a onetime guest star, once dismissed as "just tits and dragons."

Game of Thrones isn't a pioneer in gratuitous nudity on mainstream TV. Naked body parts have been slowly but surely sneaking onto American television since Dennis Franz flashed his butt on ABC's *NYPD Blue* in 1994. But it's the first critically acclaimed series to put nudity front and center. The show was once so enthusiastic about rampant nakedness that it inspired new terminology — including *sexposition*, a word coined by TV critic Myles McNutt to explain how *Game of Thrones* uses random unclothed bodies as window dressing for plot exposition.

But the sex seems to have (mostly) disappeared, with no

plot-driven explanation. The reason might be that the actors were becoming more resistant. Emilia Clarke, for example, has renegotiated her non-nudity clause with the studio. Or maybe HBO was growing weary of the negative press — one former director claimed he was pressured by producers to do more full-frontal scenes to satisfy the "pervert side of the audience" — and legal battles with sites such as Pornhub, where steamy *Game of Thrones* clips trafficked higher than actual porn.

Whatever the reason, the lack of clothes-less activity in the Seven Kingdoms hasn't slowed the naked renaissance it helped spawn. Indeed, the boob tube has become, quite literally, the boob tube. The number of TV nude scenes featuring women jumped from 497 on 27 different shows in 2008 to 1,370 on 147 shows in 2018, according to Mr. Skin, an online database of nudity in media. Male exposure has seen a similar bump, from 72 scenes across 16 shows in 2008 to 736 scenes on 149 different shows last year.

The explicit carnality on recent shows can make *Game of Thrones* seem downright tame by comparison. All the tropes that first caused Westeros to appear so scandalous — incest, rape, prostitutes, woman-on-woman finger-banging, sex at funerals — have since played out on shows including *Shameless*, *Harlots*, *The Deuce*, *Vida*, *She's Gotta Have It*, *Outlander*, *Altered Carbon* and *Orange Is the New Black*. And they're showing much, much more than anything we witnessed on *Game of*



ILLUSTRATION BY MARIE BERGERON



“A lot of scripts don’t have more direction for a sex scene than ‘They go for it.’”

“A lot of scripts don’t have more direction for a sex scene than ‘They go for it.’” discussions — they’re leading them. Once you create a safe space where actors feel they’re in charge, they’re more willing to take risks.”

That’s very different from just a few years ago, when the climate on TV productions, even at its best, wasn’t about making actors feel safe. During filming for the first season of the HBO series *Westworld* in 2015, nude extras were asked to sign a consent form that warned them they’d be engaging in “graphic sexual situations” that would likely involve “genital-to-genital touching” and posing “on all fours while others who are fully nude ride on your back,” among other acts. When the form was made public, HBO insisted it had been written by a casting agency without HBO approval.

Esmé Bianco, who plays the frequently nude prostitute Ros over several early seasons of *Game of Thrones* — as a refresher, she was featured in the season one tryst coached by Littlefinger — has only praise for how she was treated by the director and producers. But she also has moments of post-MeToo hindsight.

“You really had to be your own advocate back then,” she says. “If there was something I didn’t want to do, I’d have to speak up in front of the entire crew, which was predominantly men. That’s really difficult in a job that’s so competitive, and nobody wants to be seen as a troublemaker.”

Today, actresses don’t have to make those difficult decisions alone. HBO hired longtime stunt performer and fight director Alicia Rodis to serve as the network’s first “intimacy coordinator.” Working on shows including the upcoming *Watchmen* series — the TV adaptation created by showrunner Damon Lindelof, who’s such a fan of on-screen nudity that he claims the vanity license plate on his car reads FFRNTL — as well as *The Deuce* and *Crashing*, she acts as a liaison between the actors and the director, making sure the sex scenes involve more oversight than “a cock sock and a prayer,” she says.

But it’s not just about letting the actors have more input on how much skin they reveal. “What looks good on a screen can be very different from what feels good,” Rodis says. “A lot of scripts don’t have much more direction for a sex scene than ‘They go for it.’ But that’s not helpful to an actor. That just means do what you’d do in the bedroom. But what works in the bedroom doesn’t always read on camera. It’s like stunts. You’re not actually going to punch someone in the face. You have to cheat it to the camera in a certain way.”

Her job isn’t just about protecting actors but facilitating more believable sex scenes. “I’m not walking onto a set and trying to get everyone into down jackets,” she says. “I want more sex



scenes. But let’s do them right. It comes down to giving actors better direction, and that can be as subtle as asking them, ‘Could you alter your hip movement to a swivel instead of a pop?’”

Sciortino isn’t convinced that what TV sex needs is more choreography. “You have to be careful not to over-monitor to the point where it becomes sterilized,” she says. “Acting needs enough room for spontaneity. These intimacy coordinators are great, but actors should also have the freedom to lose themselves in a moment.”

Emilia Clarke, who has been repeatedly naked as the Mother of Dragons on *Game of Thrones*, has gone out of her way to justify why her nudity on the show is not just narratively necessary but empowering. “It was naked, but it was strong,” she told Stephen Colbert in 2016, explaining why Daenerys needed to emerge sans clothing from a fiery inferno after smiting her enemies.

Jemima Kirke, a regular on the HBO series *Girls* who never shied away from being naked on camera, doesn’t feel so strongly that every instance of nudity needs to be fraught with significance. “Nudity doesn’t need to be sexual,” she says. “But it doesn’t need to be empowering either.”

Kirke’s most memorable unclothed moment on *Girls* involves her casually eating yogurt while lounging naked on a couch, and she’d like to see more of that unremarkable nudity, where actors go au naturel just because being naked is part of being human. “If you’re an actor, then your body is there for telling stories,” says Kirke, who also shot several nude scenes in the recent film *Untogether*. “I don’t think anything should be off-limits. I don’t mind being objectified. That’s my job as an actress. I’m a part of the visual story.”

Sex on TV isn’t going anywhere. If anything, we’ll be seeing even more flesh on the small screen in the coming year. But it’s not about how much square footage of naked skin is allowed or how graphically the sex is simulated; it’s about actors being heard. “We want to keep everyone safe,”

Rodis says, “but there’s also an artistry in this. The actors aren’t just props. They should be involved in the decision-making.”

She remembers one of her first days on the set of *The Deuce*. She was sitting with an actress — she declines to name her — who was preparing to do a nude scene. “She seemed a little distracted,” Rodis says. “So I asked her, ‘Are you okay?’ She was like, ‘What do you mean?’ I said, ‘I know this is an emotionally volatile and very sexual scene. Are you okay with all of this?’ She looked at me and said, ‘You know, I’ve been doing this for 20 years, and I think that’s the first time anyone’s ever asked me that.’” ■



Thrones. Last year gave us the first semi-erect penis on TV (on Netflix’s *Easy*) and the first nothing-left-to-the-imagination depiction of oral sex (on Starz’s *The Girlfriend Experience*).

Put simply, we’re living in a golden age of TV nudity. But are today’s productions using the same sexposition playbook as *Game of Thrones*, or are they venturing into uncharted territory? Is it just nudity-by-numbers, or are they aiming for something more revelatory than, say, soft-core porn with better dialogue?

Karley Sciortino maintains it’s the latter. “The nudity being shot for TV today is much rawer and messier and more improvised,” says the writer and actress who has done full-frontal nudity on Netflix’s *Easy*, including in that groundbreaking boner scene. “They don’t shoot scenes with angles that make your tits look perfect.”

She prefers sex scenes that reflect what actually takes place in the bedrooms of human beings. “Sex is clumsy sometimes,” Sciortino says. “People can’t get the condom on, or they start laughing. There’s a great moment in the first season of *Easy* where these people are having a threesome, and there’s a baby monitor in the room. The baby starts crying, so everybody stops, and they go take care of the baby and then come back. I was like, ‘Yeah, that’s real life.’”

On her new show, the Steven Soderbergh — produced Now *Apocalypse* (Starz again), Sciortino works behind the scenes as a co-writer and creator, and the cast isn’t shy about discussing their limits. “There are a lot of conversations on the set about consent,” she says. “They’re not just having those



ETERNAL YET EPHEMERAL, LUST COMES SHARPLY INTO FOCUS...AND FADES

FICTION BY **ROBERT COOVER**

Their lips are poised to meet in a classic gesture of pure desire. Her lips are soft and vulnerable, easily bruised, his more determined, principled, their mouths slightly open as though to ask a question. Do they know each other? It doesn't matter. Only the imminent meeting of their yearning mouths matters. There is something gravely intimate about the moment, something almost sacred in its graceful choreography.

He is handsome in a rugged honest way; she is radiantly beautiful. A disembodied narrative voice is quietly cataloging: her heaving bosom, her flushed throat, her fluttering eyelids, her supple hips. Which could be where the man's unseen hands are, just below the frame, these his general impressions. Are their lips moving? Perhaps they are whispering something to each other. Or maybe they simply like the feel of moving lips, brushing softly against their own.

The voice speaks now of the frame's grip on a composed reality, its power to clasp and hold an image abstracted from the ceaseless flow of time, as the two gaze longingly into each other's eyes. A tear glitters in one of hers. His, shadowed by the brim of his fedora, betray an infinite sadness, and we too feel sad; how can we not? In their eyes — lenses facing in and out at the same time — we see what they see and feel what they feel. We are inside their kiss, tasting the proximity of their lips, suffering their anguish, their ardor, their aroused anatomies (there are chemicals involved, hormones). We know nothing about them beyond this embrace, but we sense that, whoever they are, they are about to part.

Yes, something is ending. This is a farewell kiss. The steady rightward drift of the poignant image toward the looming edge (she seems about to swoon!) confirms this. As does the gentle voice, speaking now of the panoramic frame's generous plenitude, its sensuous embodiment of the rational — or maybe the irrational? — as it succumbs to the roar of city traffic. Their lips have not yet met, but too late, they are crossing the threshold of the frame and disappearing into the obscure uncertainties beyond, swept away by the noisy rush of a congested city thoroughway. As hundreds of cars and trucks race by in both directions, brakes shrieking, horns and sirens blaring, a phantasmal image of the parting lovers appears on them, as though to say such a vision is not easily dismissed. We catch intermittent glimpses on the traffic's flickering blur of their eyes, their mouths, their hats — though without the

comforting integrity of the frame: It is impossible to know what is the container, what the contained. But then the traffic too slides away into the emptiness at the advancing edge, carrying the ghostly lovers with it, the automotive roar sinking to a background hum, and then that dies too.

The thoroughway unravels to an empty country road, spooling through a bleak desert landscape like the thread of time. It is utterly silent out here, but for a soft breath of wind and the distant caws of predatory birds. After miles and miles of flat emptiness, a lone structure appears on the side of the road, a building long since abandoned, its roof fallen in, its doors boarded up, its broken marquee a tilt. There is an old poster, yellowed with time, affixed to the wall under the marquee. It advertises a movie called *The Kiss*, and the two parting lovers are pictured on it in the same iconic scene of pathos and desire seen before.

One can hear, like wind chimes, the faint echoey tinkle of carousel music. As we approach the tattered poster, the image on it pivots, and we now face the slightly crossed eyes of the woman, gazing up wistfully into the face of the man, just beyond her nose, his back to us. She is still dressed in glowing white, and he is hatted, but the rest of his clothing is gone, his pale buttocks being used now as a screen for the projection of the original image: their rapt gaze, their yearning mouths, she on the verge of swooning. It is like a frame within a frame, reminding us of the rugged persistence of imbedded memory. The picture is grainy and water-spotted, adding to its romantic old-movie atmosphere, though that may be due in part to the texture of the screen. The darkness between his thighs seems to beard her, and their embrace is cloven and distorted, but their longing gaze across the dark divide still compels attention, and cues our own emotions. Their melancholy is again our melancholy, their ardor our ardor, the screen's imperfections only augmenting the tender gravity of the moment.

But then it is over. The projected embrace recedes, as does its screen and the man who provided it, the wistful woman too — they all shrink away, as if to say we have seen all there is to be seen. There is only the desolate country road, the ruined cinema, and soon they are gone too — in the dreadful silence, a distant snap of elastic against flesh can be heard, a rip, a gasp — leaving only the ever vaster emptiness of the desert, stretching in all directions as far as the eye can see, like an image of the end of time. ■

ILLUSTRATION BY **SPIROS HALARIS**



ANA Espinola

Photography by **LUIS PEREZ CORREA @LUISPerezCORREA**
MUA **LUIS PEREZ CORREA** Model **@ANA ESPINOLA B**





Ana Espino is a Paraguayan model with killer curves named one of the hottest Latinas on Instagram, this brunette bombshell shows us her wild side.

You have achieved so much in your modelling career, where do you come from here?

I have to admit, it has been a long way, I have so many things to do besides modelling, thinking about a fashion business, I wanna finish my studies, and start with nutrition as well. So I can combine, fitness, nutrition and fashion :)

What would say has been your biggest break in your modelling career?

In my fitness career was in the Florida Estata Championship, where I placed number one, where I got all the attention of the NPC/IFBB. And in my playboy career, was on a playboy cocktail party where I was founded by Luis, Casting Director in Mexico, a week after I had my first Playboy photoshoot. Was really nervous, but was a great experience!

There has been high points for your as a model, but what would you say has been your lowest point? And how did you get past it?

The lowest point in my career when was my mommy passed away, I was devastated and I just didn't want to go out of my room. How I passed it? Praying, reading and meditating, sometimes is hard to accept some things. I think everyone has a purpose in this life, so we have to make the best of it.

As a model you travel to some of the most exotic destinations, but which has been one of the craziest places you had to do a shoot?

I did a photoshoot with elephants in Bali, but I want to visit more exotic places, deserts, beaches, mountains, would like to try something with snow as well.

We can imagine that things don't always go as planned on set, how do you cope with the stress when everything seems to go wrong?

I laugh a lot, everyone is always nervous on set, feeling happy makes everyone feel more relaxed and comfortable working with me, things aren't bad like they look like :)

Photo shoots can take up to hours, what is the first thing you do when the photographer says "that's a wrap".

I say thank you, let's go! Always have a nice conversation with the photographer about the vision he has, and what

we want to get, so we are connected, on the same page, in that way hours are less complicated and more fun.

What do you do to relax or when you have some free time available to you?

I pamper myself, I like to go to the spa, nice massage, maybe drink some tea while I am reading, yoga is a really good exercise to relax.

You are a competitive bikini athlete, tell us a little more about this part of your life?

I think being on a stage is a lifetime experience, you feel so many things in 3 minutes, preparing with strict diet, working out at least 2 hours per day. You finish exhausted, is part of the preparation. I suffered obesity before, had issues with my imagination, so it's hard for some people to see me like a playmate or even athlete. Been a high performance athlete takes determination, discipline, and a lot of mental strength.

How do you manage preparing for a show and your busy modelling schedule?

It is hard but not impossible, I do meal prep, wake up more early than I am used to, to do my cardio, coffee and start the day. I always carry a fruit (apple), protein shake in my bag (just in case). If I am not able to go to the gym that day, I take resistance bands on set, so I still can workout some sets, squats, walking lunges. It is important, you will find a way, if not you will find an excuse.

If you could get involved in any cause, what would it be and why?

I am part of a small charity house in Paraguay, "Mita Renda" means house of the kids, we serve lunch for people from a popular neighborhood. I like to help, I would like to get involved in more causes like cancer and other adults, my dad is a doctor. So I have been in touch with different patients, and sometimes the best medicine is just the company of a kind heart able to listen to old memories from the past.

How would those close to you describe you?

My closest friends describe me, smart, educated, kind, dedicated and beautiful.

Last words for our readers.

Thanks so much everyone, I read all the DMs you send me on Instagram. I will be opening soon a new profile in different platforms so I can stay in touch. Don't forget to follow me on social media. I have a big surprise coming soon.







ART AT THE

EDGE OF THE EARTH

clothes last June for Dark Mofo's annual nude swim. The event occurs at dawn after the winter solstice, when Hobart, Tasmania experiences the longest night of any city in Australia.

festivals, and museums. Intrigued by the sex-themed event, we are quietly traveling Tasmania, one of the world's most idyllic and scenic destinations.

by CHARLES SHAFER and JESSIE WINFORD & REMI CHAUVE

Moments before dawn on the morning after the southern hemisphere's winter solstice, more than 1,500 people, wearing only towels and red swimming caps, crowded onto a narrow beach in Hobart, Tasmania — one of the southernmost cities in the world. As the pink and orange pastel glow of the sunrise bathed the crowd, a voice over a loudspeaker announced, "Now is the time: Take your clothes off!" A thunderous beat dropped, as did the towels and with a collective scream that perfectly echoed the screeching gulls overhead, the swimmers threw themselves into the bracing waters of the River Derwent. Seconds later they reemerged, wearing expressions of ecstatic triumph. One newscaster, securing his towel, ran to kiss his wife and baby. "Saw some people from work," he said. "We're best friends now!"

This inclusive, anarchic spirit is fueling an increase in Tasmania tourism, local and international, exceeding that of other Australian states. Universally acknowledged as an instigator of this shift is the Museum of Old and New Art, or MONA, opened in 2011 by local mathematician and professional gambler David Walsh. A short ferry ride upriver from Hobart in the suburb of Glenorchy, MONA has succeeded beyond even Walsh's predictions — it has had nearly 3 million visitors to date — and now sustains two music and arts festivals: Mona Foma in the January summer, and the more gothic Dark Mofo in the June winter, for which the mass cold plunge skinny dip has become a trademark event.

Featuring exhibitions of such heavyweight artists as Marina Abramovic and Matthew Barney, MONA's gallery, a labyrinthine space carved into a Triassic stone cliff, eschews museum conventions such as wall labels and, says Walsh, the tendency to ignore the two biological imperatives that drive people to make art: "fucking and killing." It also pushes against the digitization of experience with the large scale and sensorially disorienting works in its permanent collection, cheekily named "Monanism." Take James Turrell's *Unseen Seen*, a kaleidoscopic light-based installation inside a giant



Melbourne artist Greg Taylor's *Cunts...and other conversations* is part of Monanism, the museum's general collection. More than 900 MONA works come from founder David Walsh's private collection.

white sphere. Walsh describes Turrell's art as "heroin but without the side effects." (Participants are required to sign waivers before entering.)

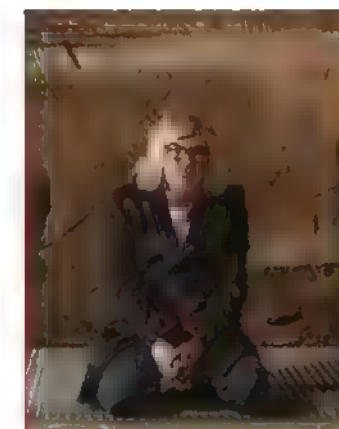
Australian sculptor Greg Taylor's *Cunts...and other conversations* — a series of 151 life-size porcelain casts of vaginas spotlighted along a darkened pathway — highlights in its scale each body part's individuality as well as the absurdity of censoring the female body on social media and elsewhere. Women can be overheard telling companions about finding their double. (Versions of the sculptures also appear in the gift shop, as vagina-shaped hand soap.)

Walsh, 57, whose fast-paced, irreverent speech and shoulder-length gray hair bring to mind Scottish comic Billy Connolly, made a fortune as a gambler using quantitative analysis. He has a savant-level understanding of probability and contends that human life is governed by chance. "The worst decision I ever made was the first bet I placed, because there was a three to five percent chance that it would have made me a compulsive gambler and destroyed my life," he says, sitting at MONA's Faro restaurant, where bartenders pour charcoal-black margaritas garnished with feral pig eyeballs frozen in ice. "There was only one chance in a million or less that it would have made me wealthy."

"Why can't darkness be good? The night is a time to dream."



Much of Dark Mofo's winter solstice-inspired programming happens after the sun goes down, including Winter Feast, a seven-night riverside banquet that celebrates cooking with fire. The festival returns to Hobart in June.



Walsh, a gifted mathematician, is a leader of the Bank Roll, which Australian newspapers have described as the world's biggest gambling syndicate. The mysterious millionaire has parlayed his preoccupation into a bona fide art empire.



From straddling plastic sheep on the ferry ride to the site to drinking margaritas garnished with frozen pig eyeballs (ouch!) before they melt: MONA is a museum experience like no other. I would even bury your ashes.



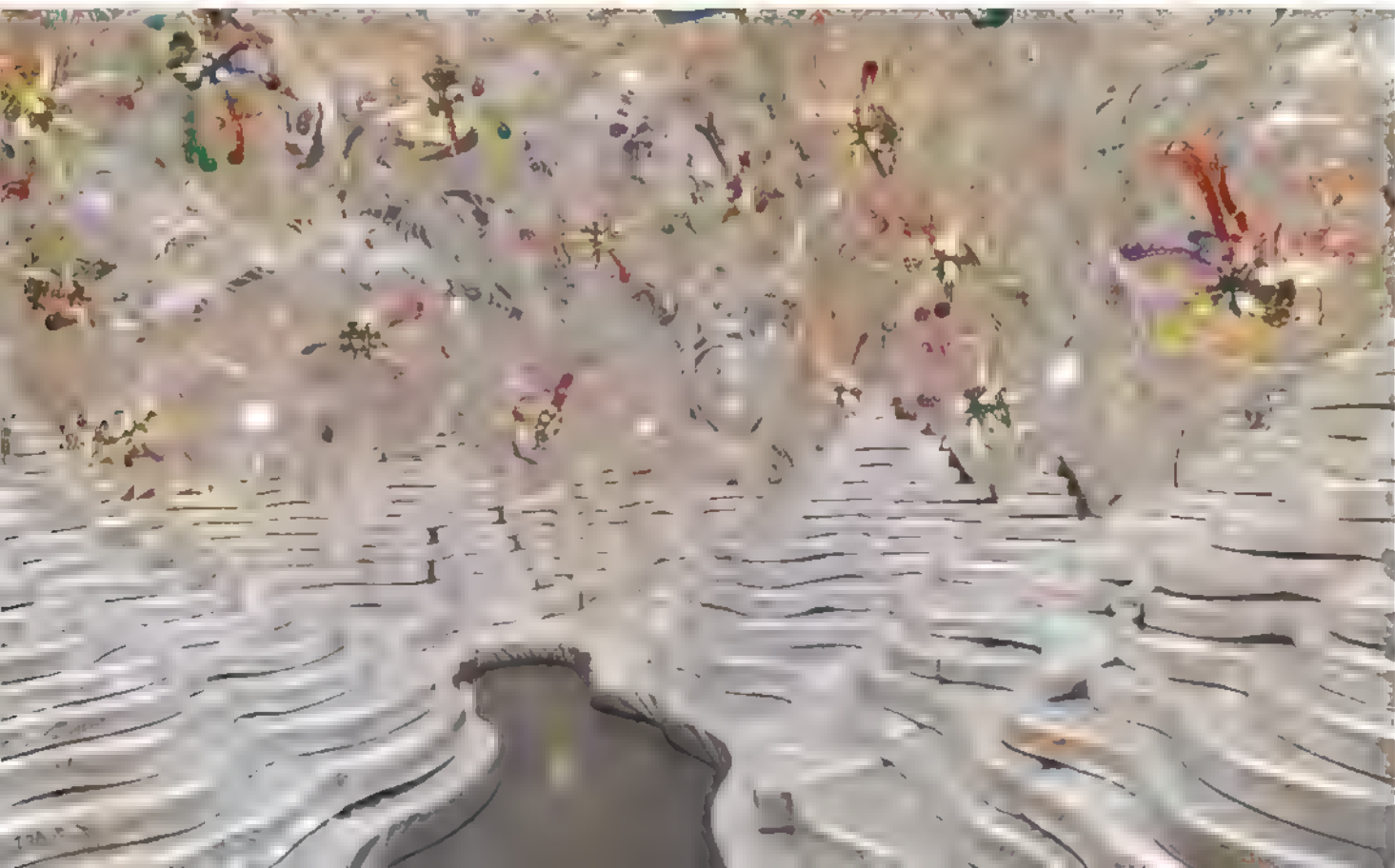
Left and top: For the 2018 Solstice Anonymus costume ball, Dark Mofo occupied the heavily ornamented, six-story Hadley's Grand Hotel in downtown Hobart. It took a night of the most eyes wide shut with its unrestrained hedonism, the food and cash-pledged bash spread throughout the hotel's common areas and guests' rooms.

Walsh's luck reverberates beyond MONA. International travel to Tasmania rose 18 percent in 2017 alone. In addition to the farmers' stalls at the sprawling outdoor Salamanca Market (still Tasmania's most visited attraction; MONA is second), an ever-growing number of farm-to-table restaurants are benefiting from the surge. And in December, MONA announced plans for Motown, a roughly \$287-million mini-village featuring a five-star hotel, playground, theater, outdoor performance space, library and spa designed by Turrell and Abramovic that could open as soon as 2024.

For now, the two festivals, both overseen by Walsh, remain the most distinctive MONA affiliated events as much for the diversity of their offerings as for their democratic atmosphere, with no VIP areas or exorbitant ticket prices. Mona Foma, curated since its 2009 inception by Violent Femmes bassist Brian Ritchie, has welcomed Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, Amanda Palmer and Gotye, as well as more experimental work such as Eve Klein's Vocal Womb, in which the opera singer performed while the interior of her body was projected onstage via a laryngoscope.

Among the dozens of acts at this year's Mona Foma were Grammys-nominated indie rocker Courtney Barnett, composer and sound artist Nick Ryan, who translated the movement of 27,000 pieces of space junk into sound; and Australian black metal project Striborg, teamed with the Australian Art Orchestra.

Despite Mona Foma's appeal as an escape from the northern hemisphere winter, the standout at this remote location is the



Dark Mofo festival's subversive curatorial mission. Founding creative director Leigh Carmichael sees it as a chance to reclaim darkness. The two-week long citywide event celebrates all things transcendent, ecstatic and primal. "Why can't darkness be good?" Carmichael asks. "I understand why it's used as a metaphor for evil, but it isn't actually. It's also sublime. The night is a time to dream."

David Lynch serves as a frequent inspiration. Last year's festival featured a re-creation of *Twin Peaks*'s Bang Bang Barb — part of the immersive Night Mass spread over five venues in central Hobart — and performances by Lynch muses Rebekah Del Rio and Chrysta Bell. The seminal industrial group Einstürzende Neubauten has become a repeat guest, along with a program of experimental operas, metal bands and frequently unclassifiable performers.

Dark Mofo's often provocative artistic interventions, such as *Siren Song* in 2017, also separate it from Mona Foma's music-focused programming and, Carmichael believes, serve as its most remarkable aspect. Every day of the 2017 festival, for seven minutes at dawn and dusk, an ethereal composition burst forth from speakers throughout downtown. Few complained, apparently much of this city's population of more than 200,000 has embraced projects one would expect to be tolerated only at more remote festivals like Burning Man.

But not everyone appreciates the spectacle. A recent real estate boom, influenced in part by the tourism boost, has seen Hobart surpass Sydney as Australia's least affordable city for rentals, which could force out local artists. Glenorchy, where MONA is located, remains one of the state's most disadvantaged areas, as tourists typically go directly back to Hobart's more chic restaurants, shops and galleries instead of staying in the suburb. And local Christians took issue with the 33 foot-tall red neon inverted crosses installed along the Hobart waterfront for last year's Dark Mofo. Hobart's then lord mayor, Ron Christie, sought to withdraw financial support for what he called the "shock festival."

Last year the city council approved a performance by 73-year-old Sydney-based artist Mike Parr. For three days, Parr buried himself without food in a 25 square foot steel room underneath a busy downtown street. The piece's metaphoric resonance of buried knowledge has a universal quality, but in Tasmania it evoked the island's violent history: In the first half of the 19th century, 90 percent of Tasmania's indigenous population was massacred by European colonists in the Black War — an attempted genocide that remains unrecognized by the national government and unknown even to many Australians. More than 3,000 people gathered as Parr descended beneath the street, a truck quickly sealed him in with asphalt and the first cars began driving over the chamber. In the crowd, various Aboriginal groups both shouted support and peacefully protested the action. The divide prompted discussions on neglected history that could be heard in coffee shops and restaurants throughout Hobart, among metalheads, visiting visual artists and locals alike.

Traveling from the United States for upward of an entire day to visit an island of whooping and wailing nude swimmers and an unabapologetically sex and death forward museum may seem counterintuitive — but for Walsh, that's the whole idea. "Comfort can never change your viewpoint," he says. "You can stay home and watch a good show on Netflix and be almost certain to have a decent time, or you can go to a most likely bad, difficult artwork at Dark Mofo that isn't satisfying anyone — but there's a one in 1,000 chance that it will change your life. There's no chance Netflix will."

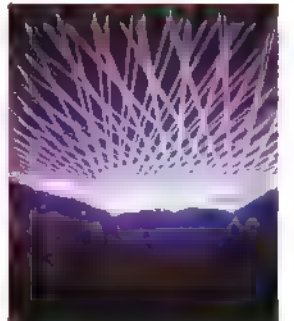
Familiar pleasures are easy to find, but they can narcotize



Above: Performance duo Inner Course engages bystanders in complex acts of mindfulness and reprieve at Mona Foma 2019. **Right:** Swedish singer-songwriter Neneh Cherry co-headlined the January event, which was held in the city of Launceston for the first time this year.



Right: Audiovisual artist Rob Fox's Launceston Constellation showers visitors with interlocking laser beams that interact with sound. Below: Local artist Amanda Harter channelled Rodin when she created Man, a 423-cubic-foot painting sculpture for the summer festival.



Opposite top: Visitors to James Turrell's *Unseen* are required to enter in pairs, sign waivers and carry panic buttons because of the piece's potentially overwhelming haunteness effect. People have later reported feeling nostalgic for the stranger with whom they entered. **Opposite bottom:** Walsh has called MONA a subversive adult Disneyland. Case in point: Randy Polumbo's *Grotto*, a kaleidoscopic room Walsh has christened the "seize the capital" of the museum.

Man in His Domain
**THE REVEREND
WILLIAM J. BARBER II**

Commemorating what would have been Martin Luther King Jr.'s 90th birthday, Barber spoke at Stanford University's Memorial Church in April. The name of the event: *Where Do We Go From Here?*

BY AMANDA PETRUSICH

FROM HIS PULPIT IN GOLDSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA, THIS PROGRESSIVE PREACHER IS MUSTERING AN ARMY OF LOVE—COMPRISING SAINTS, SINNERS AND EVERYONE IN BETWEEN

The precise origin of Watch Night — a New Year's Eve prayer service, common in Southern black churches, in which a congregation assembles to recall the moment the calendar flipped from 1862 to 1863 and Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation became law — is murky, but the sentiment involved is consonant with the season. Let us gather to celebrate the thrill of change and the promise of renewal.

This past December 31, at the Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, parishioners had filled most of the pews by 6:30 P.M. Latecomers jockeyed for standing room near the back. A banner stretching from one end of the balcony to the other read POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN: A NATIONAL CALL FOR MORAL REVIVAL. A camera crew snaked power cords up and down the pulpit stairs, preparing for a live internet broadcast. The crowd was a mix of regular churchgoers, graying activists and young couples in expensive eyeglasses. Buttons broadcasting liberal causes and catchphrases (LOVE TRUMPS HATE, BLACK LIVES MATTER, NASTY WOMAN) were abundant.

The night's headliner was the minister and activist William J. Barber II — newly minted MacArthur Fellow, former president of the North Carolina chapter of the NAACP and co-chair of the revived Poor People's Campaign, a movement conceived by Martin Luther King Jr. in 1967. Barber and I were scheduled to meet for a formal interview before the service, but his brother, Charles Barber, a minister in Georgia, had recently been diagnosed with inoperable pancreatic cancer, and earlier that day the situation had grown grim. One of his colleagues called to say that Barber needed to spend the day with family.

My breath caught as I put my phone back on the hotel nightstand. How could anyone, faced with that kind of news, address a sprawling congregation, let alone send it into a new year armed with hope?

...

Barber was born in 1963, in Indianapolis. Around his fifth birthday, his parents moved him from Indiana to a segregated kindergarten in Washington County, deep in North Carolina's so-called black belt. His father had grown up there and wanted to help desegregate the state's public school system. He became one of the first black teachers in the county. Barber's mother was the school's first black office manager. (She still works there: "The great grandchildren of some people who called her nigger when we first came now call

her Mama Barber," Barber writes in his book, *The Third Reconstruction*.) On weekends, his father traveled around the state, holding revivals in onerous churches. "He was sharing the gospel message that gave him hope, believing that it was good news for others as well," Barber writes. "But at the same time he was also building connections as an organizer."

The elder Barber's decision to move his young family to the segregated South demonstrated his conviction that faith and activism are inextricable. "He believed that racism was against the imago Dei, the image of God in every person, and that systemic racism and poverty were forms of false worship, idol worship, the worship of self over the care for all humanity," Barber tells me, speaking over the phone two weeks into the new year. "My parents could have stayed in the Midwest, but they chose to bring me to a segregated kindergarten. They came because a black principal asked them to come back home, and Daddy said that he accepted what he believed was a Macedonian call. In the Bible, the poor Christians said to Paul, 'Come help us.' And he did."

Barber's home base is the Greenleaf Christian Church in Goldsboro, about 55 miles southeast of Raleigh. If you listen to old sermons recorded on crackly 78 rpm discs in the 1920s and 1930s — preachers like the Reverend J.M. Gates of Atlanta hollering about how "death's black train is coming" — you'll recognize Barber's heavy, undulating cadences, the repetition of key phrases, the call and response rhythms, the rich, intoxicating music of his voice. The North Carolina-based writer Benjamin Hedin, author of the 2015 book *In Search of the Movement: The Struggle for Civil Rights Then and Now*, contextualizes Barber's rhetorical powers within the civil rights movement. "I think oratory is the proper tradition in which to place Barber, rather than activist or nonviolent apostle," he tells me. "Barber's place is to offer from the pulpit, where it has traditionally been offered, a source of hope and renewal and moral clarity. It actualizes all the hope and aspirations society by itself cannot."

Barber considers Duke professor and theologian William C. Turner one of the greatest influences on his spiritual life, and in conversation he's quick to cite Turner's comments about the link between belief and boots-on-the-ground advocacy. "Whatever you call it — being born again, touched by the spirit, moved by the divine, baptized in the water — whatever you call your 'religious experience,' if it does not mutate a quarrel with the world, and a quarrel with injustice, and a quarrel with

hatred, and a quarrel with discrimination, and a quarrel with division, then your claim to have had a religious experience is terribly suspect.”

...

Barber is nothing if not cognizant of the difference between words and deeds. In 2013 he became known nationally for his involvement in the Moral Mondays campaign, in which he led the peaceful occupation of the North Carolina capitol building. The action got national press, perhaps because it demonstrated Barber's singular ability to balance faith, activism and an intersectionality that can surprise casual atheists and traditional believers alike.

Pat McCrory, the state's new Republican governor, was determined to attack policies designed to protect the poor or otherwise disenfranchised. He slashed unemployment benefits, signed a bill that opted North Carolina out of an expanded Medicaid program and repealed the Racial Justice Act, which had allowed death row inmates to challenge their convictions if they believed they had been subject to racial discrimination. He also deregulated mountaintop fracking, eliminated tenure for public school teachers, tried to prevent public health insurance policies from covering abortions and, in 2016, signed something called the Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act, a bit of legislation that, among other things, contained directives regarding bathroom use. Per its dictates, in government buildings people could use only the bathrooms that corresponded with the sex printed on their birth certificates.

The Moral Mondays protests eventually spread to other districts and cities; more than 1,000 people, including Barber, were arrested in the first two years. In 2016, McCrory lost the election to Roy Cooper, a Democrat, making him the first sitting governor to blow a regular general reelection campaign in North Carolina since 1850. He later blamed his defeat on “the non-citizen vote,” though it was almost certainly due to the economic fallout following his endorsement of the Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act. News organizations estimated that it cost the state more than 1,750 jobs and more than \$77 million in investments and other spending, after corporations including PayPal and Deutsche Bank froze their expansion plans, Bruce Springsteen and Ringo Starr canceled concerts there and the NCAA excluded the state from hosting playoff games.

In 2016 Barber again commanded national attention, during a 10-minute speech at the Democratic National Convention

“WHEN WE TALK ABOUT MORALITY, WE’RE NOT JUST TALKING ABOUT CHRISTIANITY.”

He shuffled onstage in a dark suit and a lavender shirt. His beard was closely cropped and flecked with gray. He began, “I’m a preacher, and I’m a theologically conservative liberal evangelical biblicist.” The crowd seemed uncertain how to receive this. “I work to conserve a divine tradition that teaches us to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God,” he went on. “I’m worried by the way faith is cynically used by some to serve hate, fear, racism and greed.” The crowd swooned. A headline in *The Washington Post* declared, **THE REV WILLIAM BARBER DROPPED THE MIC**.

Barber's work is staunchly nondenominational, and he welcomes individuals who are repulsed by institutionalized religion, have been cast out of their churches, are scarred by the right's long standing co-option of “morality” or find the very notion of God absurd. “Our movement is not asking people to be Christian. When we talk about morality, we’re not just talking about Christianity. That’s not even my only entry point, it’s an entry point,” Barber says. “We have black, white, brown, native, Asian, atheist, people of faith, people not of faith, young, old, gay, straight. A moral fusion movement is not about people becoming Christian, or any particular faith. A moral fusion movement says, ‘Listen, there are some issues that aren’t left versus right, Democrat versus Republican, but right versus wrong.’”

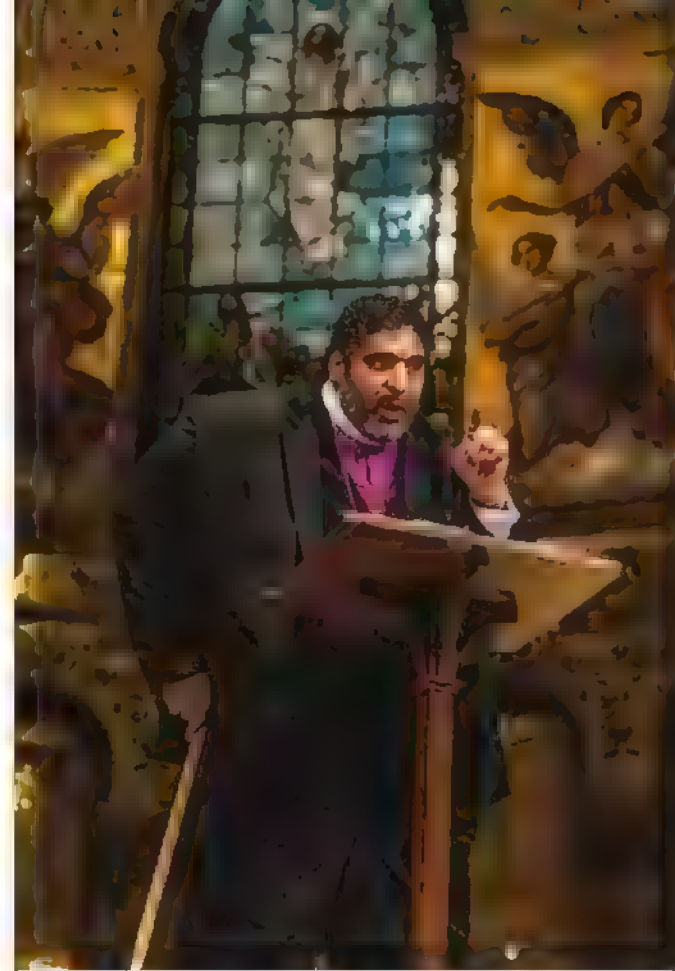
In addition to his role at Greenleaf, Barber is president of Repairers of the Breach, a nonprofit that takes its name from a portion of Isaiah 58:12 (“Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt, you shall raise up the foundations of many generations, you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.”) The issues he cares about the most — voter suppression, endemic poverty, health care — he sees as moral obligations, which we have heretofore collectively failed to prioritize or demand. Donald Trump's presidency is merely a symptom of the moral void at the nation's center, he insists, and hardly the cause of it. He reminds me that violence against the poor both preceded and will outlast this administration.

...

Cornel West, also a decorated theologian, was an early supporter of Barber's work. “He is a spiritual giant, a great freedom fighter and a grand organic intellectual,” West told me recently. “He puts a smile on Martin Luther King's face from the grave. I have great love and respect for him.” Comparisons to King are not uncommon.

In a way, Barber's work is predicated on the idea that morality is self-evident. For decades, American popular culture has normalized self-idolatry and individualism, to the point that it's now widely seen as a virtue. “I’m a worry ‘bout me, give a fuck about you,” is how Drake puts it in “Started From the Bottom,” which remains (even if Drake is Canadian) as good a parable of the American dream as anything. America was founded on promises of independence and self-betterment, yet Barber is suggesting we should worry less about ourselves and more about our neighbors. His message is radical insofar as it requires a significant recalibration of the American psyche — away from grotesque exaggerations of the Horatio Alger myth and toward the promise of Emma Lazarus's “The New Colossus” mounted inside the Statue of Liberty.

Barber can be a challenging subject, in large part because he's resistant to letting his ego overshadow the movement. He has submitted to his work so fully, it's difficult to cleave the man from the mission. It seems obvious Barber's advocacy comes at a personal cost, yet he's preternaturally adept at contextualizing his suffering in a way that inevitably diminishes it. His pain, whether physical, internal or existential, can always be



managed. (The physical pain is very real: Barber suffers from ankylosing spondylitis, an inflammatory disease that, over time, causes the vertebrae of the spine to fuse.) This too feels radical, in an era of incessant broadcasting, in which the airing of grievances is its own online pastime.

When I ask Barber if he ever fears for his safety — after Charleston and in light of massacres everywhere — he is reluctant to answer. “I look at violence in two forms,” he finally replies. “And I’ll say it quickly. When Coretta Scott King was asked about violence after her husband’s murder, she said, ‘Yes, but there are other forms of violence, like denying health care, denying education, denying culture, denying a living wage, denying labor rights.’ Another form of violence is an apathetic attitude that refuses to address these other forms of violence. So I’ve experienced that kind of violence, first of all. But then, yes, I’ve also experienced the violence of...” He pauses. “I don’t talk about it a lot or give glory to it, but I’ve received notes that say things like ‘You’re in the dead pool, you’ll be dead by Christmas.’ I’ve seen the ugly, ugly things on the internet. I received some of that stuff in 2011, before Trump was ever around. But that’s not the me I want folks to know.”

He is similarly reserved when I ask if he’s considering a presidential bid. “I don’t really have any desire to hold political office,” he says. But he is quickly energized as he segues to thoughts of the future, forecasting a movement propelled by citizens “who are willing to put their bodies on the line, their mouths to work, who are willing to lose their pulpits” to spread the essential message “that change has happened, change is happening, change can happen, change will happen and that we are the people.”

...

On New Year's Eve, Barber's sermon was preceded by at least an hour of singing and remarks from half a dozen other speakers, including the Reverend Liz Theoharis, his co-chair in the Poor People's Campaign (She wore a clerical stole over her ministerial robes that read **JESUS WAS A POOR MAN**.) “We never have a stage at a Poor People's Campaign event where a person stands by themselves,” Barber says. “That’s intentional. And we never talk about any one issue separate from any other, so that we’re not fighting in silos.”

When he finally rose to speak — he had been sitting on the side of the stage, watching and listening, nodding, occasionally offering a quiet “That’s right!” — he acknowledged that his day had been arduous. He then delivered a 45-minute sermon that gathered strength as it went, like a slab of snow cascading into an avalanche. He made the case that people helping one another on a national scale is possible. It shouldn’t even be that hard. Reorganize the budgets, resist gerrymandering, make sure every citizen is healthy and allowed to vote.

By the end, I was dizzy. We filed outside. Midnight was still three hours away. People shook hands in the cold, wishing each other well in the forthcoming year.

A few days into January, Barber's brother passed away. “If he was going, it was a blessing that he was able to die with his mama singing the songs of the church to him,” Barber tells me. His voice, that assured baritone, now sounds thin, and it quavers as he describes the funeral. But as it did in Raleigh, it gathers an inexorable momentum as he delves deeper into his work and his faith — how we can change and why we need to. Listening to him on the phone, as in the pulpit on New Year's Eve, I feel awake, and hopeful.





JENNY VALE

Photography by **THOMAS H.P. JERUSALEM - MUTE (@MUTE_PHOTOGRAPHY)**
Model **@JENNY_VLE**





Tell us something surprising about you?

I love learning languages! I understand Portuguese and speak English, Spanish, and Italian. Currently, I am taking classes learning Russian language and dialect.

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?

Of course! I love being able to connect with my current fanbase and gaining some new ones along the way! Having this opportunity is amazing.

What inspires you?

My motivation to succeed in the modeling industry is very competitive. I am learning to evolve and grow with every opportunity.

Why did you choose to pursue a career in modelling?

I loved the idea of being able to have fun and showcase modeling as an art form. While having something outside of my professional life that I could enjoy.

Who do you look up to in the modelling industry?

Irina Shayk, she's fierce, she's the runways and gives back through charity work.

What are some of your hobbies?

Swimming, and traveling. I enjoy meeting people and experiencing different cultures.

Name three things on your bucket list?

Enjoy the sunset on a hot air balloon, learn how to surf, travel to Australia!

Turn-ons

Men that are polite and confident. Who know what they want.



Turn-offs

Laziness, not having any initiative.

Describe to us your perfect date

A perfect date is wanting to see that person again, showing off your personality to each other without feeling awkward. Having fun and no stress taking yourself too seriously.

Which world capital would you most like to visit, and why?

Barcelona! Adventure, nightlife, food, and fun.

What is your mantra?

"You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough."





Marilyn Cole

I GREW UP IN PORTSMOUTH, a historic port city in the south of England. By the time I was 16, I couldn't want to leave school and earn money. In my family it was tradition to work for either the Civil Service or the bank — a respectable office job. I went into the Ministry of Defense and worked in the dockyard as a clerk and then at a bank. Then I broke the family mold.

A friend had moved to London. She said, "There's this place called the Playboy Club. All you have to do is smile and you make lots of money!" Now, this ended up being far from the truth. I wrote the Playboy Club in London, and they replied with a typed letter on headed notepaper: "Please come in for an interview." The only requirement? Bring a bikini.

So I left my parents' little house and got on the tram with a cooked chicken and a loaf of bread in my handbag that my mum had given me. I was 21.

I walked in for my interview and saw this glossy blonde apparition. Her name was Lindy, and she was the Bunny mother. Her hair was swept up, her eyelashes were perfect, her lips were lacquered. My first reaction was, Girls in Portsmouth don't look like this. To be hired as a Bunny was like being in the army: the precision, the detail. It required a healthy discipline, and either you had it or you didn't.

I was still in training when I met my future husband, Victor Lowmes. He was a Playboy executive. We were standing dutifully in line, waiting for Frank Habicht, the resident photographer, to take our photos, when this whirlwind, this force of nature appeared. He said to the photographer, "Ask this girl if she's ever done any beauty work." He didn't talk to me. "No, I haven't," I said. Victor said, "Well, test her for Playmate," and walked out. Frank took me aside: "You'll earn \$5,000 for one photograph." That was it for me. I wasn't stupid. I knew PLAYBOY magazine and knew I'd been singled out.

Days later a chauffeur picked up Frank and me in a silver Cadillac convertible with red leather seats. I didn't even ask where we were going. It happened to be Victor's house, but he left as we arrived.

An obvious question is "How did you feel about taking off your clothes?" We didn't discuss it. I was committed. I knew it was professional. I was ushered to the dressing room and given a robe. I said to myself, Okay, you go in as Marilyn Cole and you come out as somebody else! I was suddenly a model and an exhibitionist. But I was never inhibited. You take off your clothes and then you have to act. I came out of the bathroom hoping the photographer would be blown away. Luckily, Frank looked very pleased. "Stand by that bookcase," he said. It was near a window, so there was natural light. Later on, Hugh Hefner kept coming back to that shot, saying, "This is what I want." Eight months later, Alexis Urba



had to re-create the bookcase setup in Chicago, and that became my Centerfold photo.

But before going to the States, I needed my passport, which was back home in Portsmouth. I whizzed into the house and said, "I have to go to Chicago! They're going to photograph me for the magazine."

"Oh no," my mum said. "It's one of those magazines."

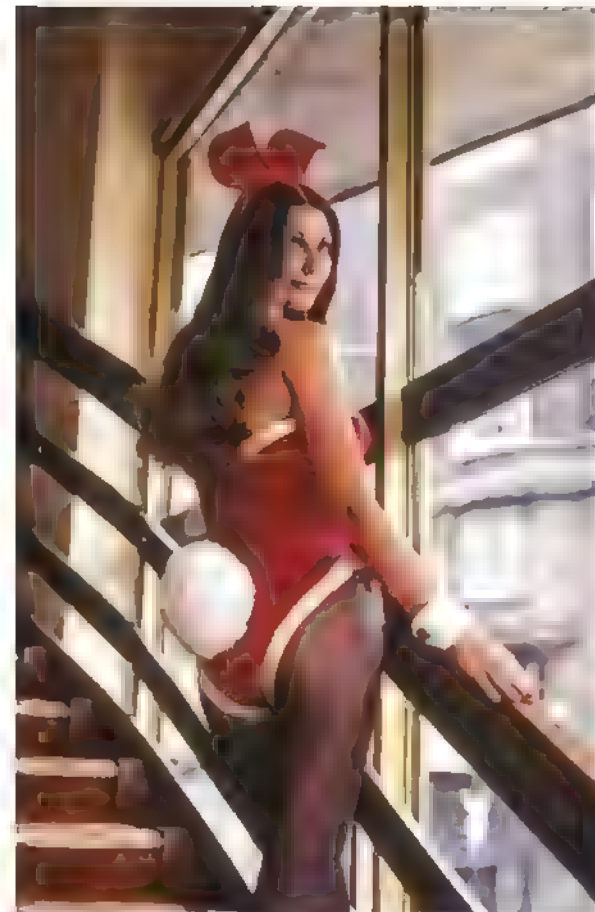
"Yes. But don't worry, Mum, they drape you."

Off I went to the Playboy Mansion. About two months later I had to show my parents the Polaroid of me standing completely naked, no draping. Nobody had necessarily intended full nudity when we went into the shoot, but it evolved as a business decision. The dilemma was to go public or not. Hefner considered himself a romantic, but it was all about timing. That initial black-and-white test shot we'd taken in London had been haunting him, and he decided it could be PLAYBOY's first foray into full frontal

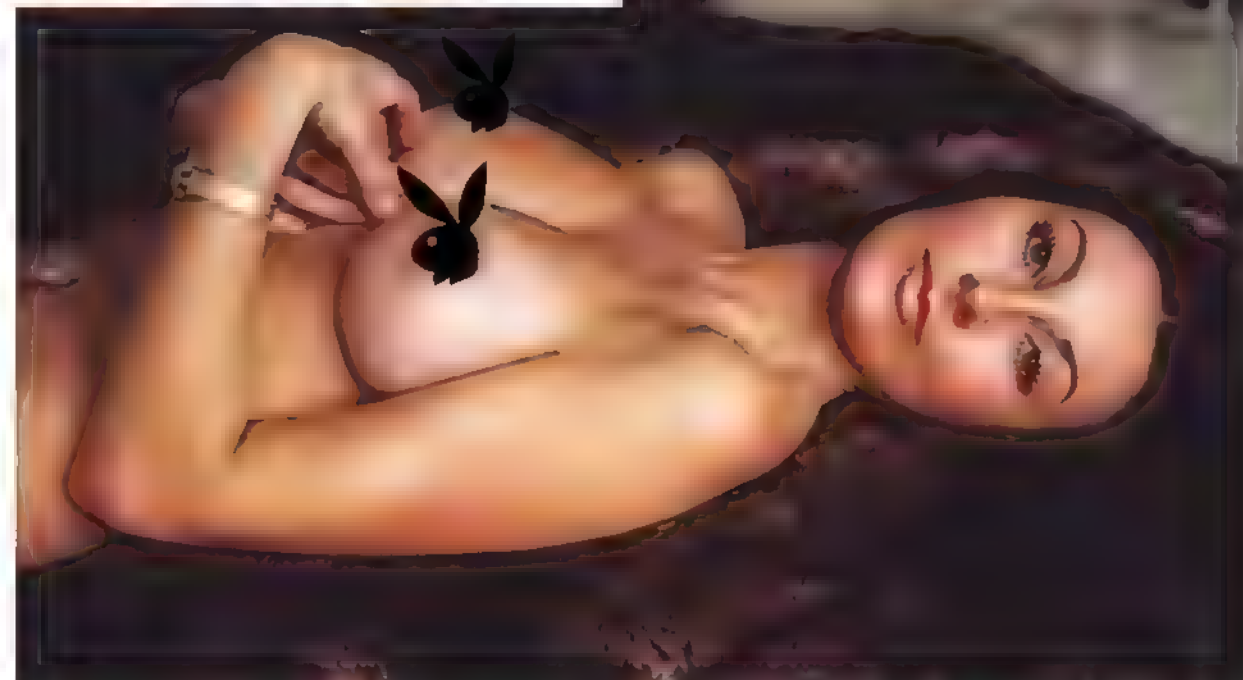
I said to my parents, "I'm going to be Miss January 1972." My mom looked at the Polaroid and said, "Well, doesn't your hair look nice." My father's response: "This is like a Rubens." He saved me in that moment. Other Playmates had parents who wouldn't talk to them.

I started dating Victor seriously in late 1971; we married in 1984. You might call it a love story. We were at the Playboy Club in London when I found out I'd won Playmate of the Year 1973. I gasped. My first thought was, Another \$5,000 — bring it on! There was a lot of tabloid attention. The British press loved that a working-class girl from Portsmouth had gone to America and had success in PLAYBOY. Today I work as a journalist.

When I walked into the Playboy Club, I knew I'd found my people. What I didn't know was how much it would change my life. There had always been something in me that wouldn't be confined by society's expectations. No one was going to stop me.

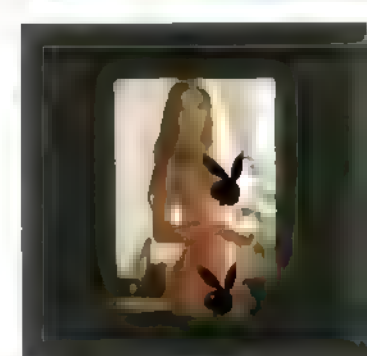
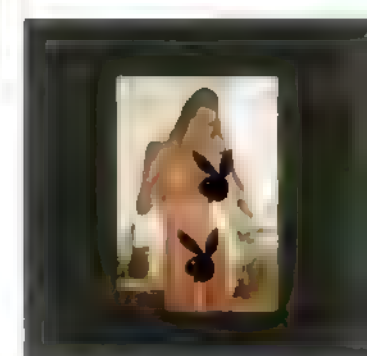
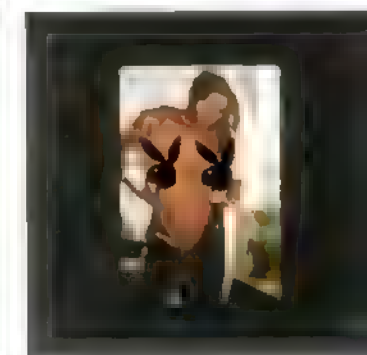
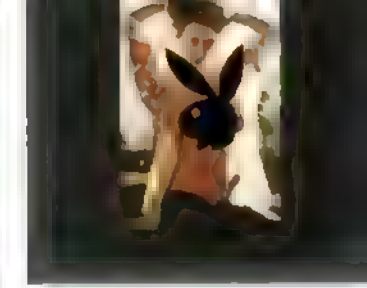
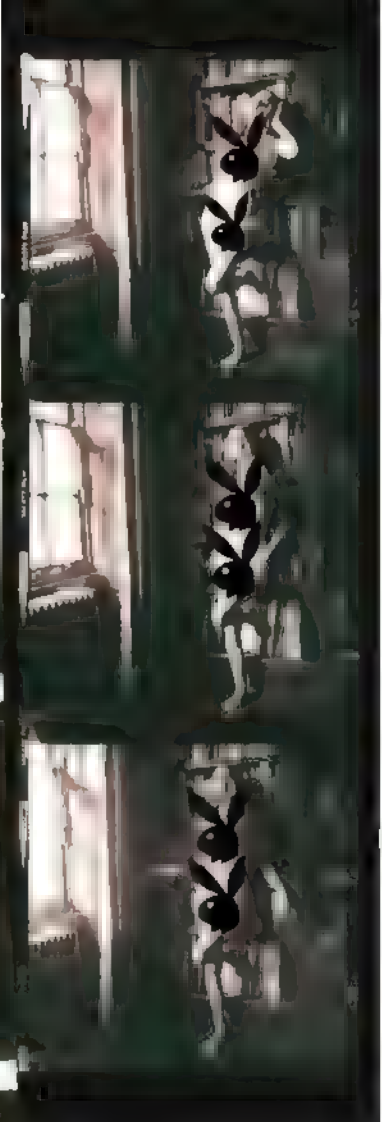


Previous spread: "Alexas Urba shot me on Crete draped in just a piece of chiffon," says Cole. "How many people can say they've stood naked in the cave where, according to Greek mythology, Zeus was born?" Opposite page, far left: "I had a swift and real sense of the hugely talented, extraordinary, creative people I had landed amongst at Playboy. I am very privileged and proud to be a part of all that." Opposite page, bottom right: Cole and Victor Lowmes at the Playmate of the Year luncheon in London. Left and right: Cole was training for her job as a Bunny at the London Playboy Club when she was asked to do a test shoot to become a Playmate. "My red velvet outfit trimmed in gold was our Reception Bunny costume. The blue and silver was the VIP restaurant costume. Below: "My hair and makeup on these shoots were both natural, as in no professional help. It was always the photographer and me working together."

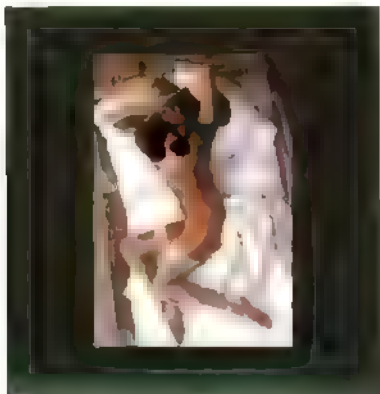
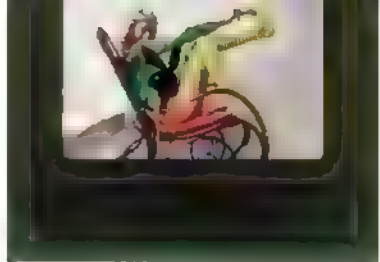




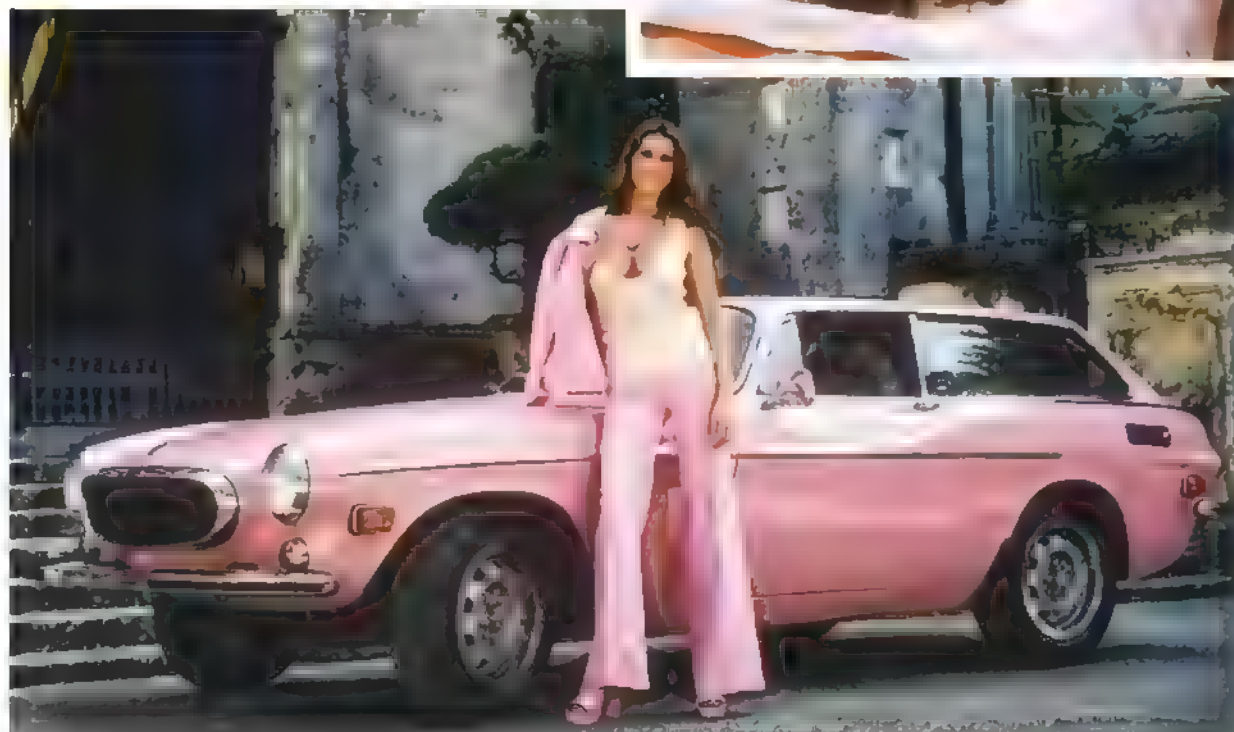
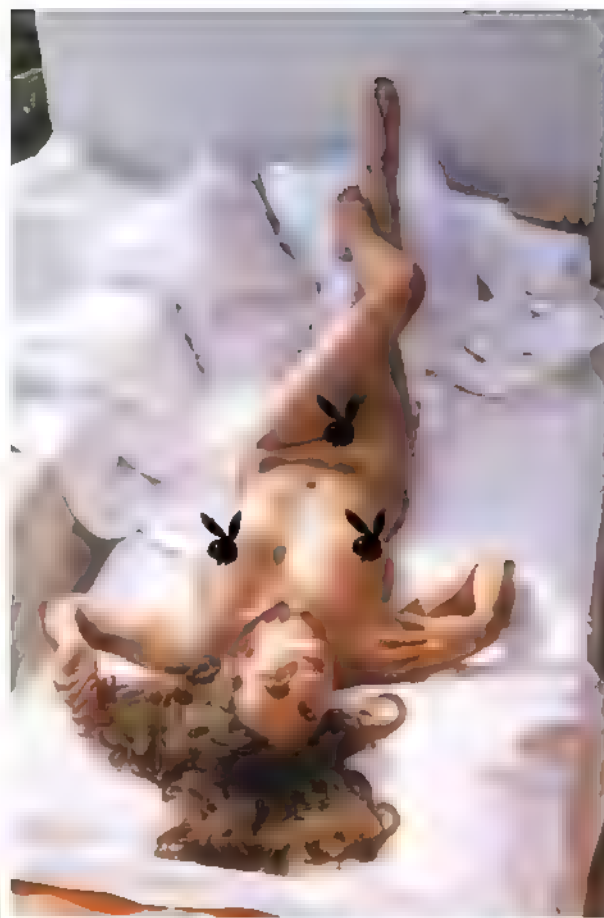
Opposite page: Cole's January 1972 Centerfold was Playboy's first foray into full frontal. "She recalls of the August shoot 'It was very hot when we shot the Centerfold. We had to keep taking breaks as the fire was constantly being stoked to get the flames just right.'"



Above: Cole's test photos by Frank Habicht. These early shots mark the first time I was naked in front of a camera. We were in Victor's elegant townhouse in Connaught Square, London. He had great eclectic taste. I posed amongst custom-made Italian furniture and fantastic paintings by the likes of Francis Bacon, Egon Schiele and Picasso. The photos are evocative with a real '90s vibe. Left and right: Outtakes from Cole's Playmate of the Year photo shoot.



Left: More memorable outtakes from Cole's PM/TV show. Right: This was taken on the balcony outside my room in Greece. Alexis loved to shoot in daylight, so there I was in an unmade bed as though having slept outside. Below: "The Playmate Pink" car was my prize as Playmate of the Year 1973. The car and I were flown to Miami Beach for that single shot. Opposite page: "Alexis saw us all as goddesses, whether in Greece or elsewhere. I'm wearing a vintage Moroccan dress along with a necklace of antique coins — all from the casbah. I loved collecting exotic jewelry and clothes on my travels.





Marina **GRACE**

Photography by **ARTHUR ST. JOHN** HMLA **TAYLOR JAZZ MARTINEZ**
Stylist **NATALIA NAILA** Location **BIG MIKE**







What is your name and where are you from?
My name is Marina Grace and I'm from Ukraine

Where do you live now? and do you enjoy it?
I live in Los Angeles and I love it, but I do miss my family and friends in Ukraine

You're officially a Playboy cover model! Congratulations! What does this mean to you?
Thank you for this opportunity I have always dreamed of being a Playboy model and now it is a reality thanks to Arthur St. John and Playboy I can't tell you how happy I am!

Have you ever been to Australia? If not, would you like too?
I haven't been to Australia yet, would you invite me? :o

What's your favorite animal and why?
Jaguar, because they are top level predators and I dream of having one as a pet

Tell us something surprising about you?
I am not predictable, I love to keep you guessing

Describe yourself in one sentence.
I am passionate, caring and very direct

What is your favorite hobby?
I love dancing and working out.

What is your biggest turn on in a man?
I love a man who is powerful and possessive

What turns you off the most?
Disrespectful and rude attitude.

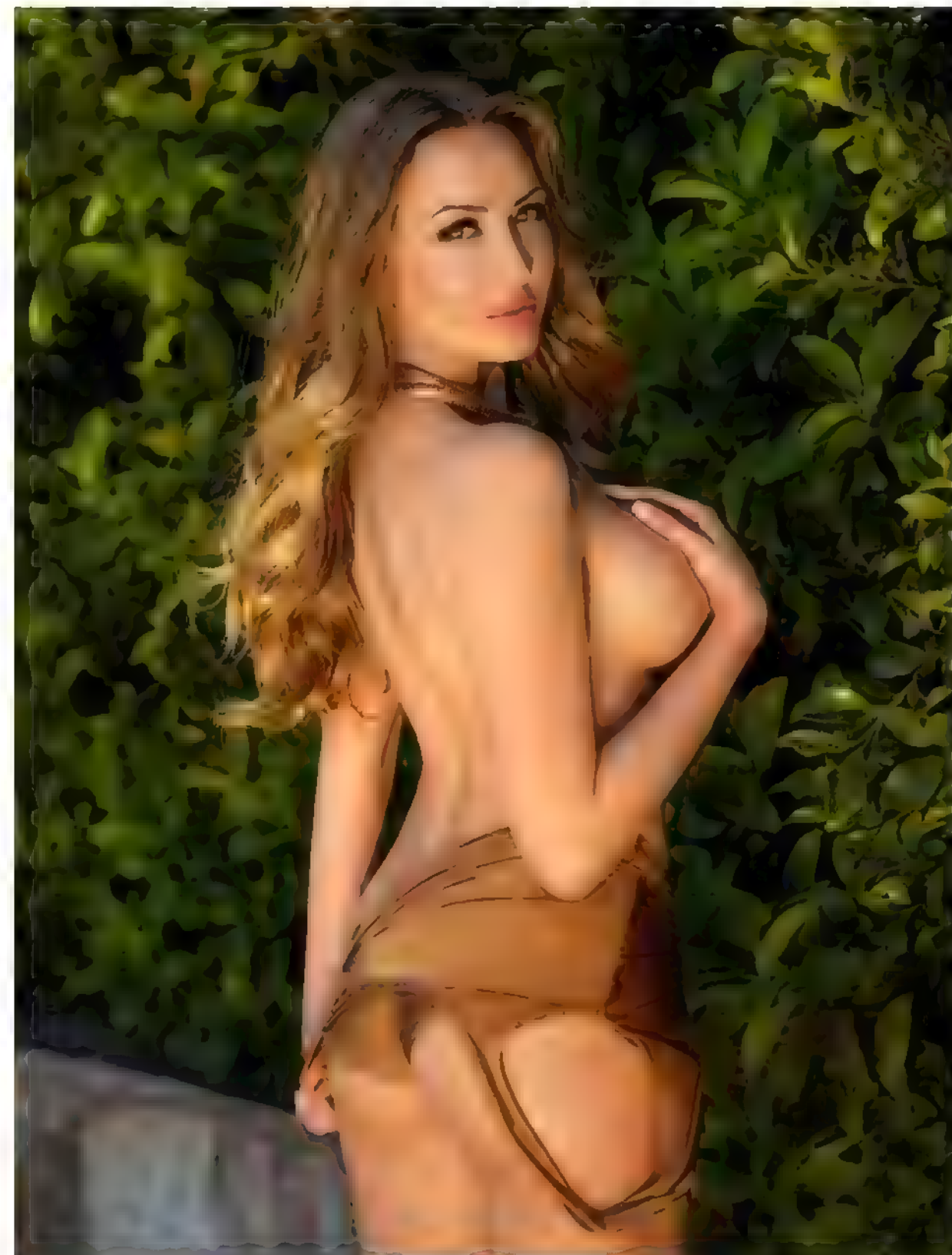
Describe to us your perfect date.
Let me think... Staying in bed and having sex all day

What's your favorite body part on you? on him?
For me it has to be my butt. For him, I think you know that answer

What advice would you give aspiring models?
There is so much competition in the modeling industry, it's all about who you know and how strong your connections are. The right people can open the right doors for you. Even if you are rejected, keep trying, you can succeed if you want too

Any last words you would like to share with the readers?
Thank you for following me and showing me love. This is my 2nd cover this year and probably my favorite one. Thank you Playboy I am proud to represent you on the cover. Much love





PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: SETH ABRAMSON

A candid conversation with America's most dogged pursuer of the Trump-Russia story — a professor, poet and “metamodernist” out to prove collusion

Seth Abramson is a hard fellow to read. A Twitter savvy commentator on the president's alleged Russia ties and author of the 2018 book *Proof of Collusion: How Trump Betrayed America*, he doesn't look like a natty legal analyst, nor does he come across as an investigative reporter or a goggle-eyed conspiracy theorist living on rage, Adderall and likes. Instead, he could be a regional manager for a callcenter chain, wearing roomy jeans, a suit jacket and extremely sensible shoes. Not long ago, he says, he wore nothing but athleisure pieces with sports logos. This suit jacket represents a recent, if only occasional, addition to his ensemble. With his

book advance, he also bought a homely new Subaru sedan.

As with the best normcores, Abramson's rejection of style reflects its own punk defiance. Roomy jeans notwithstanding, he knows how to calculate an aesthetic effect. On Twitter, Abramson helped pioneer the literary form of the “thread.” Both admired and reviled, the thread uses a string of tweets to create a kind of argument in epigrams. Threads are personality driven, and readers (including hate-readers) of Abramson's tweets have gotten to know the eccentric New Hampshire through his meticulous attention to the evidence of Trumpworld's alleged

collusion with the Kremlin. His threads demonstrate his almost robotic recall and gift for sequential thinking, his love of asterisks as italics and, above all, his sometimes tedious prolificacy. An Abramson thread can run to thousands upon thousands of words, which is no mean feat on a platform meant to inspire thoughts consisting of 280 characters or fewer.

Abramson was born on Halloween 1976, in Concord, Massachusetts. He's a professor of communications art and science at the University of New Hampshire, as well as a published “conceptual poet” and a lawyer with five degrees — a B.A. from Dartmouth, an M.A. and a Ph.D.

from the University of Wisconsin, an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and a J.D. from Harvard Law School. As a poet, he has produced adventurous (and often weird) stuff such as a mash up of many of the cruel things he's been called online. In 2018 he was named a columnist at *Newsweek*, but his position within the fourth estate is unfixed. Not only is he easily dismissed as a lefty Jerome Corsi or Alex Jones, but as a rule media gatekeepers don't like random Twitter freestylers getting unlimited word counts and 600,000 followers. No wonder outlets from *The Atlantic* to *Slate* to *The New Republic* have called Abramson “delusional,” “hyperbolic” and stuck in a “conspiracy mind set.”

And yet his case, launched on March 13, 2017 with a so-called “mega thread” on the Trump-Russia connection, is compelling. If *Proof of Collusion* seems woolly, it's because Trump's relationship with the Kremlin is damned woolly. As of this writing, not one error has been found in the book, which offers what Abramson calls “a theory of the case” of Trump-Russia. The theory? That Trump and his aides conspired with the Kremlin and other hostile powers to exchange control over American foreign policy for money and election help.

PLAYBOY sent Virginia Heffernan — a columnist for *Wired* and the *Los Angeles Times*, host of the *Trumpcast* podcast and author of *Magic and Loss: The Internet as Art* — to interview Abramson

at a Hilton hotel in Manchester, New Hampshire, he lives nearby with his wife and two dogs. Heffernan reports, “Shortly after we met, Abramson told me that two reporters had recently been dispatched to interview him for what he predicted would be ‘hit pieces.’ Square and provincial, far from the cliquey Beltway and Manhattan pundits, he's plenty fun to drag. But a funny thing happened to the reporters: They didn't write their hatchet jobs, because they started to, like him. More than that, they started to believe him. As the Department of Justice continues to churn out indictments

of major Trumpworld players, slugging journalists who have tirelessly documented the Trump-Russia story has begun to lose its savor.

“In person, it's Abramson's extraordinary kindness, his sly brain and his no-frills charm that get you. The fact that few major media outlets have ever had his back — the late media reporter David Carr once said he'd have no authority if his last name weren't ‘of *The New York Times*’ — makes him more appealing, not less. He's a midrange sedan amid the sleek BMWs of the cable news set, and when I'm feeling

thought my writing would comfort anyone I receive scores of messages every week saying that it has exactly that effect, but my assumption on the front end of writing what I've been writing was that it would irk a large number of people. Even when I'm not writing about the law, my brain has been wired to think like a lawyer and to break down arguments in a particular way that I thought would actually frustrate most people, particularly those who aren't lawyers.

PLAYBOY: But this is the *Playboy Interview* — irk is allowed. Frustration is allowed. Fury is encouraged. You can even cop to impure thoughts, like Jimmy Carter. Think of all the gonzo people who have done this interview: Miles Davis, Vladimir Nabokov, Yoko Ono. You're left-brained gonzo.

ABRAMSON: Or Pynchonesque, some people say.

PLAYBOY: Okay, Pynchonesque, meaning you're in your head and excruciatingly detailed.

ABRAMSON: Normally, if you're a writer and someone tells you you're Pynchon-esque, you would be thrilled. But when people describe me as Pynchonesque, they mean I might be seeing connections between signals that are, in fact, completely discrete.

PLAYBOY: And that maybe you're writing fiction.

ABRAMSON: Right.

PLAYBOY: With that in mind, I want you to prove collusion to me.

ABRAMSON: As the left-brained gonzo that I am, the first thing we

have to determine is what our frame of reference is. There's a certain amount of information about collusion that would be found compelling in a movie called *Proof of Collusion*. There's information that would hold water in court. There's information that might make a corporate journalist say, “We now have proof of collusion.” Then there's a certain amount of evidence that would cause a partisan to change their perspective on the collusion question and say, “Hey, I was wrong. I thought there was collusion, and there isn't,” or “I said there was no collusion,



“I tend to involve myself in projects that create pretty spectacular threat matrices for a lot of people. I wish it were otherwise.”

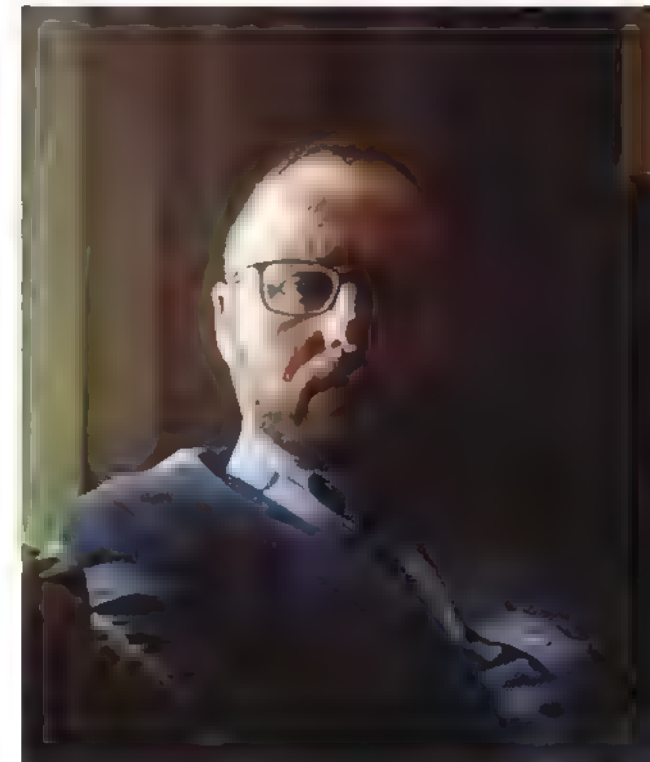


“The test for us is not ‘Can we get to the information?’ but ‘Do we understand what we're seeing?’”



“I see people on Twitter say to someone writing too much on any subject, ‘Don't go all Seth Abramson on this.’”

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS CHURCHILL



vertigo in Trump times, it's Seth Abramson I turn to for clarity. His analysis gives me confidence that someday this will end. And maybe there will even be justice.”

PLAYBOY: These are uncanny times. I walk through my days as an American thinking, simultaneously, *We're under Russian occupation* and *Another day at the office*. It exerts such a cognitive burden that the relief of seeing you spell it out is a kind of comfort you might not have intended to give.

ABRAMSON: I can honestly say I never

and in fact there is.” If we put partisanship aside, I believe there are several dozen incidents in the Trump Russia timeline that should be received as collusion across any of those paradigms. One example is Donald Trump sitting down with his National Security Advisory Committee on March 31, 2016. One of his advisors, George Papadopoulos, said to the assembled group, roughly, that he had secretly been in contact with agents of the Kremlin and that he had been tasked by these Kremlin agents to act as an intermediary in setting up a secret summit between Trump and the president of Russia that no one will know happened, and that the Kremlin had cleared him to do the scheduling and the logistics and the communication between the two parties to ensure that the two are able to discuss geopolitical complications in American foreign policy without anyone knowing about that conversation.

PLAYBOY: What gives you the confidence to say this is something that really happened? **ABRAMSON:** When *The Washington Post* first reported what George Papadopoulos claimed to have communicated to Trump, they phrased it as Papadopoulos revealing himself “as an intermediary for the Russian government.” Adding to that, I believe there’s the legal language, which is that if you are acting as a Kremlin intermediary who has been specially tasked by the Kremlin to communicate a message and also to schedule a secret summit, you are, legally speaking, an agent of the Kremlin. So let’s apply that to the courtroom paradigm: George Papadopoulos, legally speaking, was acting as a special agent for the Kremlin in that situation. He informed an entire room of men working on Trump’s campaign that he was a Kremlin agent for that special purpose. Their response to that was not to contact the FBI, not to fire him, not to tell him, “Don’t do this,” but in fact to promote him to the speechwriting team for Donald Trump’s first foreign policy speech. At that point, that speech was four weeks away. Across any of the paradigms I mentioned — political partisanship, the courtroom, journalism, Hollywood — that’s collusion.

PLAYBOY: Especially the Hollywood one. Suave, bronzed Papadopoulos, with his Instagrammability, his reality TV aspirations, so eager to make himself useful,

ABRAMSON: I truly didn’t pick that example because I thought it was the best. It just came to mind.

PLAYBOY: But seriously, what makes Papadopoulos’s appearance at that national security meeting and his selfidentification as a Kremlin intermediary so important that you mentioned it first?

ABRAMSON: Papadopoulos’s role in the Trump Russia story is primarily that of a canary in the coal mine. He is constantly saying things to people connected to Trump and, in some cases, to Trump himself that should immediately cause those people if they are acting in accordance with the law, American values and our democratic processes — to tell him to stop or to amend their own behavior immediately. But they

In polite society the presumption of innocence is an option, not a mandate.

don’t

I’ll give another example. On April 26, 2016, Joseph Mifsud tells Papadopoulos that the Kremlin has stolen Hillary Clinton’s e-mails. According to Trump aide John Mashburn, who testified before Congress, Papadopoulos did, in fact, communicate that information to the campaign. Well, great. The moment he communicates that information, it should have been clear to everyone in the Trump campaign, from Donald Trump all the way down, that if there’s one thing you now cannot legally do under any circumstances it’s take any action to try to acquire Hillary Clinton’s e-mails, because you’ve been told that they were stolen. So now you know that cybercrimes are being committed against

the United States. You know that any such materials are stolen property. You know that they have value, which is why the Kremlin stole them. If you solicit them or take them, that’s an illegal campaign donation from a foreign national — a thing of no kind value.

What happens is the moment Papadopoulos communicates that information to the Trump campaign, it sets off a firestorm of activity, from top to bottom, trying to get that stolen material. Papadopoulos didn’t steal any material, and while he perhaps should have registered as a foreign agent, his decision to communicate what someone had told him to someone else is not a crime. But it should have smacked the conscience and sense of legal responsibility of everyone on the Trump campaign. They should have changed their behavior from that moment onward. In fact, I believe it did nothing but excite their desire to act in a criminal fashion as much as possible throughout the entire summer of 2016.

PLAYBOY: It’s amazing when Trumpworld’s desire to go crime’ing gets excited. It’s like the jealous girlfriend meme: Paul Manafort walking hand in hand with crimes and ogling.

ABRAMSON: [Laughs] More crimes.

PLAYBOY: Okay, but the other thing about Papadopoulos that’s relevant for the Mueller probe is that his yapping likely is what set off the FBI. The night has tried to say that it was suspicious about Carter Page, or the appearance of the Steele dossier, that initiated the FBI investigation. And it has tried and failed to frame those things, and thus the investigation into Trump’s Russia ties itself, as unlawful and partisan. But

as far as I know, the first cue to American intelligence services was the word from the Australian diplomat dude Papadopoulos spilled secrets to one night, reportedly when he’d had too much to drink. Is that right?

ABRAMSON: Alexander Downer.

PLAYBOY: Okay. You’re damn good with the names.

ABRAMSON: I would say this. The question of how the counterintelligence investigation into five members of Trump’s campaign was initiated is entirely immaterial.

PLAYBOY: What?

ABRAMSON: If I told you that, instead of a missive from Australian diplomat Alexander Downer, it was a candygram from someone wearing a bunny suit who

showed up at the FBI office, said “Look into George Papadopoulos” and then vanished in a puff of smoke, would I care if the FBI then started asking questions to see whether there was something they needed to investigate? I wouldn’t, unless they violated someone’s constitutional rights with, say, a warrant that had no reasonable suspicion or probable cause behind it or an investigative stop with no reasonable suspicion behind it. But what excites the suspicion of a federal agent in this situation is really only relevant to the right, because they have a Rube Goldberg-like theory of a federal conspiracy that works only if the feds had some other hidden motive for initiating this investigation. Since we have no evidence of that, the question of how the investigation began is, at best, a legal question that would be handled at some future trial through a motion in limine [a pre-trial motion to exclude testimony or evidence].

A much more important question is how, when Papadopoulos ends up on the speech editing team for Trump’s first foreign policy address, the speech he’s editing has effectively, as I see it, been written by a lobbyist for the Kremlin-controlled gas company Gazprom and Dimitri Simes, president and chief executive officer of the Center for the National Interest, who has been described as friendly with Vladimir Putin. I believe that is another instance of, on its face, collusion. You do not have your foreign policy secretly written and edited by Kremlin agents and then represent your foreign policy as merely the product of your own American values and belief in the best interest of America when you know that what you expressed were the Kremlin’s values and the Kremlin’s agenda. That is prima facie collusion in the broad sense of that term. Yet we focus on Alexander Downer, which is the sort of “look at the monkey” trick someone might pull to keep you from focusing on what’s important. Even if Downer had never existed or Papadopoulos had never relayed any information to him — if, in fact, he had made up out of whole cloth this revelation from Papadopoulos — we already know that at least five allied intelligence agencies communicated to the U.S. around the same time that there were suspicious contacts between Trump aides and associates speaking to Kremlin agents.

PLAYBOY: But grant me that Papadopoulos supposedly blathered about collusion while drunk is cinematic — everyone’s favorite “coffee boy.” Al. right, give me another data point that you find persuasive in the case for collusion.

ABRAMSON: Let’s stick with that four-week period. We don’t just have the March 31 meeting and the fact that Papadopoulos contributed to the first foreign policy speech at the Mayflower Hotel on April 27, 2016. Let’s stick with the same sort of fact pattern and find a third instance of collusion. According to J.D. Gordon, who was the number two man on Trump’s National Security Advisory Committee, the Republican National Committee platform on the subject of Ukraine was changed in a way that would benefit the Kremlin when

Lately people call me a very old-timey word I never thought I’d hear this much: grifter.

the convention came around in July 2016. Gordon told the Republican delegates with whom he was arguing about the platform that he was on the phone with Trump Tower, speaking with Donald Trump directly.

They then changed the platform in a way that would benefit the Kremlin. Gordon immediately begins lying and saying that he had no role whatsoever. Paul Manafort says the same. Donald Trump says, “I had no role in that. I was not involved,” even as alleged Kremlin spy Konstantin Kilimnik is running around Europe — and we know he’s a former associate of Paul Manafort’s — saying he made this change happen through his secret contacts with the Trump campaign.

PLAYBOY: And more recently it has come out that Manafort seems to have shared

campaign data with Kilimnik, who was known as Manafort’s “Russian brain.”

ABRAMSON: Exactly. So we now know that there was an ongoing exchange of information and even negotiations between Paul Manafort and Konstantin Kilimnik about how much value monetarily Manafort was producing for Kilimnik and — through Kilimnik — to Oleg Deripaska, the aluminum magnate who has said, “I don’t separate myself from the state.” Deripaska does not see any daylight between himself and Vladimir Putin, so why should we?

PLAYBOY: Okay, we already have plenty of grassy knolls and book depositories to talk about, but I’d say the Trump Tower meeting between Trump Jr., Jared Kushner, Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya and others, in June 2016, is maybe chief among them.

Have I missed anything between April and

ABRAMSON: Oh yes. Because by the time we even get to March 31, 2016, I count the number of acts of collusion for which Trump and the Trump campaign are responsible as in the double digits.

Let’s be very clear that throughout the presidential campaign, from the moment Donald Trump announced his candidacy on June 16, 2015, he was negotiating two multibillion-dollar Trump Tower Moscow deals — not just with Kremlin agents but directly with the Kremlin itself. That would be the Trump-Agarov deal and the Trump-Rozov deal. Multibillion-dollar. Trump was hiding this deal even from top executives in the Trump Organization. He lied about it to American voters by saying he had no association at all

with the Kremlin or with Russian nationals. In so doing, in lying to Trump Organization executives, in lying to the voters, he was, every single time he lied — which was virtually daily — creating blackmail material for the Kremlin.

This also creates the possibility of Trump’s being charged with bribery if he was considering his businesses first when creating Russia policy. Those are not just acts of collusion as to each of those Trump Tower deals — the 2013 Trump-Agarov deal [which Trump was in Moscow negotiating during the period described in the Steele dossier] and the 2015 Trump-Rozov deal, those are entire courses of conduct that take months to unfold and have numerous sub-events within them that are collusion.



PLAYBOY: All this reporting and your analysis are both alarming and cutand dried. If you're just synthesizing known material, why do people keep saying you're rushing to judgment, running roughshod over due process?

ABRAMSON: Well, a few things. First, a lot of people misunderstand that the presumption of innocence is, in the law, what's called a "trial presumption," meaning it applies only for the jurors sitting in an actual criminal case. In polite society the presumption of innocence is an option, not a mandate. Number two, our standard for when and whether we apply the presumption of innocence doesn't have to be beyond a reasonable doubt. Let me give you an example: Donald Trump, according to *The Washington Post*, lies on average 11 times a day. That means he would never be treated as a credible witness in any courtroom. It means he can't be used as a source by reporters under basic journalistic principles. It also means that in our conventional politics, no one, as a partisan, should support any politician who lies 11 times every day. I would even say that if you take another paradigm I was talking about, the Hollywood paradigm, anyone who lies 11 times a day would be a terribly written character in a movie.

PLAYBOY: Yes.

ABRAMSON: I've decided I'm not going to credit any of Donald Trump's words whatsoever unless they are "a statement against interest," which in the law is considered to have a special quality of reliability because the statement doesn't serve the speaker's interests. I never quoted a defense attorney for the truth of a matter unless it was and, frankly, Trump's attorneys do this with stunning regularity — a statement against interest that never should have been made and therefore has indicia of reliability because it is a deviation from professional responsibility, something made as an excited utterance.

PLAYBOY: Reading you and talking to you, I come away with the conclusion that, yes, you're left-brained gonzo, but you're also exceptionally earnest and prudent. It's hard to reconcile this image of you with the one your detractors have — that you're a crazy conspiracy theorist, an Alex Jones of the left.

ABRAMSON: Lately people call me a very old-timey word I never thought I'd hear this

much: grifter. That is the ultimate way of saying I'm a deductive thinker — and as an academic, that upsets me more than anything else. I've made my life about building an inductive communication practice.

PLAYBOY: Once your critics can't prove a writer like you is a paid operative for George Soros or the Kremlin.

ABRAMSON: [Laughs]

PLAYBOY: I guess that is confusing. Why would anyone want to tell the truth about our times on Twitter? The cynical view is there can be no motivation for truth-telling and repping "resistance" unless it's to pick up some DNC swag or some speaking gigs.

ABRAMSON: That's exactly it. There are so many easier ways for someone with my educational and professional background to make money — many of which I was

The Washington Post is counting up his lies. They should be doing the opposite.

pursuing well before Donald Trump — than to go online and tweet 45,000 times for free. The idea that anyone gets on Twitter thinking, "Well, this will lead to a book deal, is just — no one's that crazy. But even separate from that, I think there's a reason #resistance is used as a slur. If you google my name and "resistance," almost every single article that comes up is a hit piece. The reason is that "resistance" also presumes a sort of deductive thinking, that you knew what the end result was going to be and then you figured out how to get there. You decided, "I am part of the #resistance, now how do I find my niche within that?" In fact, what the people writing those hit pieces don't want to acknowledge is that someone like me or like Walter Shaub — former

director of the Office of Government Ethics — got into this because of our values, which are something you build inductively, not because Donald Trump is president and not because there's some movement you want to be part of. Donald Trump doesn't determine my persona or my values.

PLAYBOY: You and I, though we share a suspicion of Trump, are not naturally fellow travelers. If this were the summer of 2016, we might not have seen eye to eye, because I supported Hillary Clinton and you supported Bernie Sanders. We've even mixed it up online about Tad Devine, Bernie's chief strategist and a running buddy of Paul Manafort. Things sometimes get testy on that score, but mostly we — and I think most Americans — are aligned in wanting some explanation of why, after the election, most of us felt, "This isn't America. And the truth is it wasn't America. You have pointed out it was likely Russia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey putting torque on the people who hold power. Some might say we have a Russian asset in the White House."

ABRAMSON: Well, as you indicate, all it took to be a critic of Donald Trump was to have some sense of America's core values as ingrained in our rule of law and in our democratic processes.

PLAYBOY: And maybe a passing interest in the Constitution.

ABRAMSON: Right. And therefore you can have people with incredibly heterogeneous backgrounds who find themselves in a position of offering a type of small-r "resistance" through their writing.

PLAYBOY: Now let's talk about your work before all this.

As a conceptual poet, your work seems to have been to afflict the comfortable, even destabilize our ideas of what counts as fiction and what counts as fact. But your purpose as a journalist seems to be the opposite: to lay down the facts, to comfort the afflicted.

ABRAMSON: Well, I can tell you I afflicted the comfortable so much as a poet that I got myself thrown out of the American poetry community. I have a background of being, maybe inadvertently, an affliction — in a way that is distressing to many.

PLAYBOY: Do poets think your writing is paranoid or "Russophobic" or whatever?

ABRAMSON: Oh no. Their objection was to my poetry, not to my journalism.

PLAYBOY: That's kind of hilarious. I have to hear the story of you as a poetry world

affliction — like that Ultimate Fighting Championship logo. I mean, it's obvious something is going on with your work on Twitter that excites all kinds of violent reactions. A magazine I respect once told readers not to read or retweet you. What? Nobody has ever told me not to read Tucker Carlson or Mein Kampf. Can I tell you the truth? For a while, before you had a Simon & Schuster contract, I worried that you wouldn't be able to publish a word in the mainstream media because you had been tagged as a conspiracy nutter. So let's talk about being hated, both in the poetry world and as a journalist.

ABRAMSON: I think I tend to involve myself and have for many years, well before Donald Trump — in projects that create pretty spectacular threat matrices for a lot of people. That's not why I do what I do, at all. I wish it were otherwise.

PLAYBOY: You make trouble.

ABRAMSON: Yes, and my wife and friends have noticed that trend. So when people react to me in that way — partly for that reason and partly because they almost never actually dissect anything I've said in any detail, and if they do, not in a way that's at all serious. I tend to think that the threat I'm posing is not a threat to truth or knowledge or responsible discourse but one of these other data points in the matrix of threats that any highly fraught situation can create.

PLAYBOY: In these times in particular, your professional failings can suddenly have existential consequences and could get you labeled "Vichy," or a collaborator. That can be terrifying.

ABRAMSON: One of the things that give a certain sort of existential as well as intellectual and emotional comfort about being process-oriented is that if you execute the process to the best of your ability, it doesn't guarantee the right result, but it can guarantee peace of mind. So I never go to bed in a cold sweat about whether I might be wrong — not because I don't think it's possible that I could be wrong,

but because I know that when I write on Twitter I'm bringing to bear my expertise as an attorney, as someone who has worked as a criminal investigator, to the best of my ability. If the worst-case scenario is that I'm wrong, that isn't going to concern me, because I'm invested mostly in process. But also because what great news it would be for the country if I'm wrong.

Now, how does that play into people who are full-time journalists working at corporate media institutions who are unhappy with what I'm doing? They see



me engaging in a different type of process and in a different venue than they're accustomed to, and therefore they see it as a threat to their process. But if you've worked in the criminal justice system as I have for a number of years, that is the perfect locus for many different, and in many respects contradictory, processes to be performed at once: The processes that law enforcement brings to bear are very different from those of a prosecutor, which are very different again from those of a probation officer, a judge, a defense attorney — and yet they are all in the same room, and they all believe

that ultimately a just result will, more often than not, be reached. Granted, it's often not reached, but it is reached enough that we can remain hopeful that the process, as we continue to perfect it, will lead to more and more justice over time.

PLAYBOY: It's impressive that you don't get brittle and defensive on Twitter. You hardly go a day without sticking to your subject, and you've carved out a lane for yourself: the Seth Abramson lane. A few times I've felt that you were trying for other Twitter styles, like quips, but I could almost see your discomfort. You want to go back to your patented long thread process, which builds on itself and corrects itself as it goes. You usually acknowledge when you've made so much as a spelling mistake.

ABRAMSON: Yes.

PLAYBOY: I see you're having a little trouble with "Kilimnik," by the way.

ABRAMSON: Yes, but did you see that I issued a correction and noted that I had misspelled it as "Kilimnick"? All that happens in the open. One of the things I'm doing is letting readers see my process. One of the few positive effects of the digital age is that we're better able to handle contradictory and ephemeral information that we know might be fixed down the line. We're able to better deal with temporary cognitive dissonance and say, "Look, these two things are in conflict and I know one of them has to be wrong. I'll just remember each of

them and hold them in my head, knowing that one is ultimately not going to be true." The conventional journalistic process says no one can watch me at work. But I don't mind having people see me at work, and I don't mind being wrong, because I think my readers understand I'm doing the best I can. I will admit when I'm wrong.

PLAYBOY: That sounds pretty normal and sane, but what's this about being a "curatorial journalist" or, worse yet, a "metajournalist"? I'm going to tell you right now: The old newspapermen who still get the scoops don't like that fancy academic jive

ABRAMSON: Yes, I know what they say. "Someone who's a curatorial journalist or a metajournalist gets the benefit of a hard news reporter's work without doing the work." That sort of intraprofessional tension is very common. Prosecutors don't fully understand the work that defense attorneys do and vice versa. Still, I think it's easy for a conventional, hard-news reporter to presume that what I do is easy. But if it were so easy for reporters to fully immerse themselves in all the reporting that has been done on a subject before they write, they'd all be, like me, reading Greek media, Lebanese media, Qatari media, British media. They're not doing that, because they also have things I don't have: deadlines and pressure to get stories out at a certain clip. I have to read much, much more than your average reporter because I have to survey the whole field. I will never say that a hard news reporter's job is easy and I wish they wouldn't say what I do is easy.

But many people understand how to do this curatorial work. It's about disposition. We live in a time when video gamers are being used to solve medical mysteries, and the reason a large number of them are so good at solving mysteries that even experts can't solve is because they're comfortable with failure. The very definition of being a video gamer is to take a risk, find out it's a mistake, fail, die and then try again. Increasingly with services like Twitch, you're doing all those things in public, and you're willing to have people see you fail. We've gotten to the point where there's even considered to be a certain beauty in failing spectacularly. In the digital age we must handle an excess of information, and we better learn how to handle it and allow for failure and false leads. That's how we're going to figure out how to survive.

PLAYBOY: But there's also a certain intolerance of mistakes.

ABRAMSON: Okay, so this is why I'm no longer a working poet. I wrote a poem that was perceived to be a mistake. It's actually a broader conversation in poetry right now, about the openness of contemporary poetry to mistakes, failure and recovery.

PLAYBOY: Was it seen as racist, like you wrote in Ebonics or you —

ABRAMSON: No.

PLAYBOY: I'm dying to know.

ABRAMSON: I'm a literary remixer. I had a theory that there is certain language in the public sphere that's incredibly destructive. A young man who had killed some people had written a manifesto, and I decided to take all the words — and only the words — in his manifesto and remix them into a statement of love and peace directed against his act of hatred.

Donald Trump is the living embodiment of the internet. As a result, if he commits a criminal conspiracy, it's like the internet: Everything is too public and too available.

PLAYBOY: Was this the incel figure in California, Elliot Rodger?

ABRAMSON: This was the incel figure in California, yes. And a couple of things happened. Number one, a lot of people mistakenly thought the poem was written in his voice. It was not. It was actually an address to him. But a lot of people also said understandably, that this language is so dangerous and so charged that even using it

as material to create something completely different — even something intended to combat the hatred of his words — invests each of those words with a sort of power and utility when, in fact, we want to turn away from them altogether.

I'm a metamodernist. I believe either we can find a way to use language to empower ourselves to fight what we hate in that language or we can say that we're going to turn away. But we can't turn away, that's just letting the language continue to damage us. But I'm no longer a poet, because I wrote that poem.

PLAYBOY: Hold on. "metamodernist"?

ABRAMSON: Yes. Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, a University of Oregon professor, coined that term in 1975. He believed that the public sphere needed a way of thinking that was more pragmatically useful than postmodernism for actual activist ends. Postmodernism is a useful sort of private paradigm through which to emotionally and intellectually react to phenomena. But in the public sphere you need something more "between and beyond" — more meta — to achieve your very specific real world ends.

A good example of metamodernism is the early stand-up comedy of Sarah Silverman. This sort of "I'm just a little girl!" routine, but using it to undercut misogyny in a really smart way. That would be considered sort of metamodernist. Oh, and do you remember the Saturday Night Live sketch of Kate McKinnon singing "Hallelujah" right after Hillary Clinton lost and Leonard Cohen died? That was a very metamodern moment because you don't know how to process it. What was the tone behind that? What was the intention? Her position was very hard to pin down, but that made it impossible to look away from, and it was carrying such an emotional

freight that even if you didn't understand why it moved you or whether you should be laughing or if it was in bad taste — at least for me, it made me feel better.

So my poem was literally written with all this in mind, but many people felt it was a game in my head and that publishing it was destructive. You're being insensitive to the feelings of others. If someone says, "This is really harmful,"

you can't say, "No, it's not." I mean, it is or it isn't, and that's something someone else gets to decide. Quite fairly so.

PLAYBOY: Back to Kate McKinnon. When she performed "Hallelujah" that night, Breitbart jumped on it and tweeted, "We did it, fam. We broke them." And that seemed so sadistic to me that now I tweet that line and tag Breitbart whenever the right is having its time in the barrel, to use a Roger Stone meme.

ABRAMSON: Ah, meme drift! When the language becomes severed from the image in the first few stages, but eventually the language *and* the image change. You know, I wonder sometimes whether I have become a meme, because I will see people on Twitter say to someone writing too much on any subject, "Don't go all Seth Abramson on this." But the funniest part for me is that there will always be one or two people who say, "Who the fuck is Seth Abramson?" So it's a meme fail, right?

PLAYBOY: The other meme around you is when people put "1/3,218" at the end of a tweet, to suggest they're going to be threading for days.

ABRAMSON: That drives me up a wall, because you can't thread that way. You thread not knowing how long the thread is going to be, that's the whole point. People will say, "Seth Abramson, one out of 2 million," and I wish it were that easy. I wish I knew that this was going to end at 2 million.

PLAYBOY: Okay, so you're accused of writing too long and of being a grifter. But people also say you're a fraud, and *fraud* is such a watchword of our time. We have a conspiracy to defraud the United States, in the words of Robert Mueller. Trump has been called a fraud with Trump University and the Trump Foundation.

ABRAMSON: I had a journalist with *The Chronicle of Higher Education* ask me, more than once, "Do you think you're like Donald Trump in any way?" And while I understood him asking the question because the context of the article was about me developing a following on Twitter, what I really wanted to say was I think Donald Trump got elected because our fraud sensors are really bad right now. If you're reading my discourse on who I am and how I came to write what I write as some sort of elaborate fraud while, in this country, just enough people were completely blind to the obvious career long and lifelong fraud that Donald Trump is, that suggests there's a problem.

PLAYBOY: As an attorney, can you tell

me if there has ever been anyone else so consistent in lying and who says so often the diametric opposite of the truth — like "No puppet, no puppet, you're the puppet"?

ABRAMSON: Trump is revealing the truth through the lies, effectively I've represented thousands of criminal defendants but never a single person who lies even 10 percent as much as Trump does — and I'm including people charged with financial crimes, armed robbery, you name it — which says to me that he is pathological as a liar. But it is systemic, like any pathology, and therefore it gives you an opportunity to recognize the system and either work around it or somehow repurpose it in a way that is generative. What I've said to people is that they should understand any Donald Trump sentiment as being fundamentally a lie, and their goal should be to figure out if there's any truth anywhere in what he says, rather than looking for the lies. *The Washington Post* is counting up his lies. They should be doing the opposite: "How many truths can we find?"

PLAYBOY: And in addition to the lies, he has boasted of things that are at the core of the potential crimes Mueller is investigating, like "Russia, if you're listening" and "I love WikiLeaks." I'm convinced we can get a confession out of him, but the way to do it would be to say, "You're right; there's no collusion. It's much bigger than collusion. It's much more interesting than collusion. You've done something no American president has ever done —"

ABRAMSON: My wife has made the point a million times that what reporters should do is simply use what they know happened and turn it into praise. They should say to Trump, "You were smart enough to see that our interests are aligned with Russia's interests more than any previous president ever had — in fact, none of them realized it at all. You realized it and so you said, 'Hey, if I can put us in a place where we're going to have peace with Russia, where we're both going to benefit, why shouldn't I?' Moreover, you're a businessman who became a politician. You shouldn't have to give up making money. That's why we end up with so many terrible politicians. No one who has been successful wants to become a politician. You made a decision that you weren't going to give up your success and your ability to make money just because you were going to be a politician, and you realized in the bargain that it would benefit everybody. Why in

the world would you ever apologize for that?"

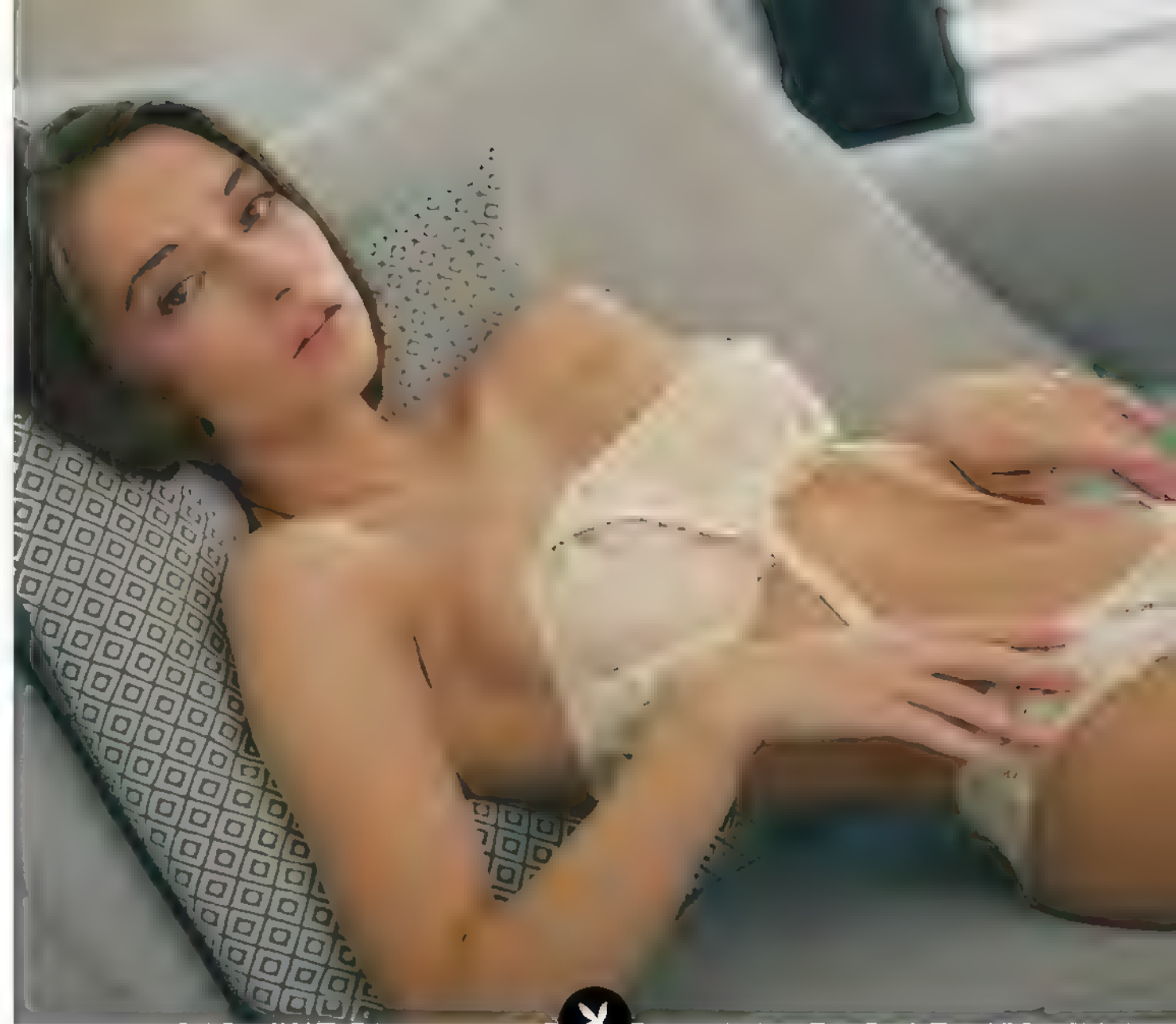
PLAYBOY: "That's right. I'm a mazing and that's tremendous."

ABRAMSON: And then he would have just confessed to something as close to treason as you're going to get without actually committing it. From a certain standpoint — and I realize now I'm going to take a dive into the theoretical — this administration is the first metamodern criminal scandal. All prior public corruption scandals had to include a conversation about how information was hidden and what we were able to access. That was where the drama was: "Can we get that 18 minutes of tape?" Does it prove the case?" Donald Trump is the living embodiment of the internet. As a result, if he commits a criminal conspiracy, it's like the internet: Everything is too public and too available. It's so present to us — the criminal conspiracy — that the challenge is "Do we have the correct frame of mind and discourse about how evidence works to recognize what is already public?" It's a new type of criminal scandal the likes of which investigators have never seen before, lawyers have never seen before, journalists have never seen before, the public's never seen before. The test for us is not "Can we get to the information?" but "Do we understand what we're seeing?"

PLAYBOY: All this news cycle poisoning has been an affront. We're already traumatized by digitization. Concerned citizens have had to put every bit of energy into reading, investigating and keeping sane and wise in a political discourse that feels like chaos, vertigo and danger.

ABRAMSON: That's true. But at the same time I hear a lot of people rising to that challenge: "I am going to educate myself on topics I never would have been interested in if we weren't in a civic emergency right now." That is a story that, oddly, I think we don't hear very often in either left wing, centrist or right wing journalism. We have the conversation about fake news versus real news, whereas if we had a more complex post internet conversation about information generally, we'd see that this whole thing has actually been a success story for people's willingness to engage with information in complex ways.

And how exciting and ennobling is it for us, as a country, that so many of us are actually willing to learn new information and skills in order to make our country slowly, with many steps back along the way, a better place? ■



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Kayla Marie
MCQUAY

Photography by **TOPDOG PHOTOGRAPHY** Model **@KAYLAMCQUAY**



Tell us something surprising about you?
 I Love to work on cars & operating heavy equipment (tractors) Everyone is a ways so surprised when they hear me talking about engines or cutting dirt with a bulldozer Just shows ya to never judge a book by its cover ,)

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
 Absolutely! Even though this isn't my first time being published in Playboy, it's a ways just as exciting as the first time! I Love my Playboy family!

What inspires you?
 Being around companionate people & hearing people's stories from all walks of life

Why did you choose to pursue a career in modelling?
 My mother put me in pageants at a very young age always knew it was going to be a passion of mine.

Who do you look up to in the modelling industry?
 Since age 12 I always looked up to Sarah Coggin - former Cardina's Cheerleader & Tropicana Model. She's so beautiful and kind. Always gave me great advice!

What are some of your hobbies?
 Some of my Hobbies include Riding Dirt bikes, Playing with my horse, RoadTrips & Adventuring new places!

Name three things on your bucket list?
 Designing and building my own home by myself. 2. Owning a Horse rescue 3. Getting my pilot's license

Turn-ons:
 My biggest turn-ons is a guy who isn't afraid of anything & is a true gentleman.

Turn-offs:
 Hmm... would have to say my biggest turn-off is probably someone who smacks their food when they eat. Haha It's definitely one of those small things that can really drive me nuts o

Describe to us your perfect date.
 I'm pretty simple. My perfect date would have to be something outdoorsy - surfing, riding, camping or just relaxing at a beach. Bonding with someone having fun is always more exciting than going out to dinner or having drinks

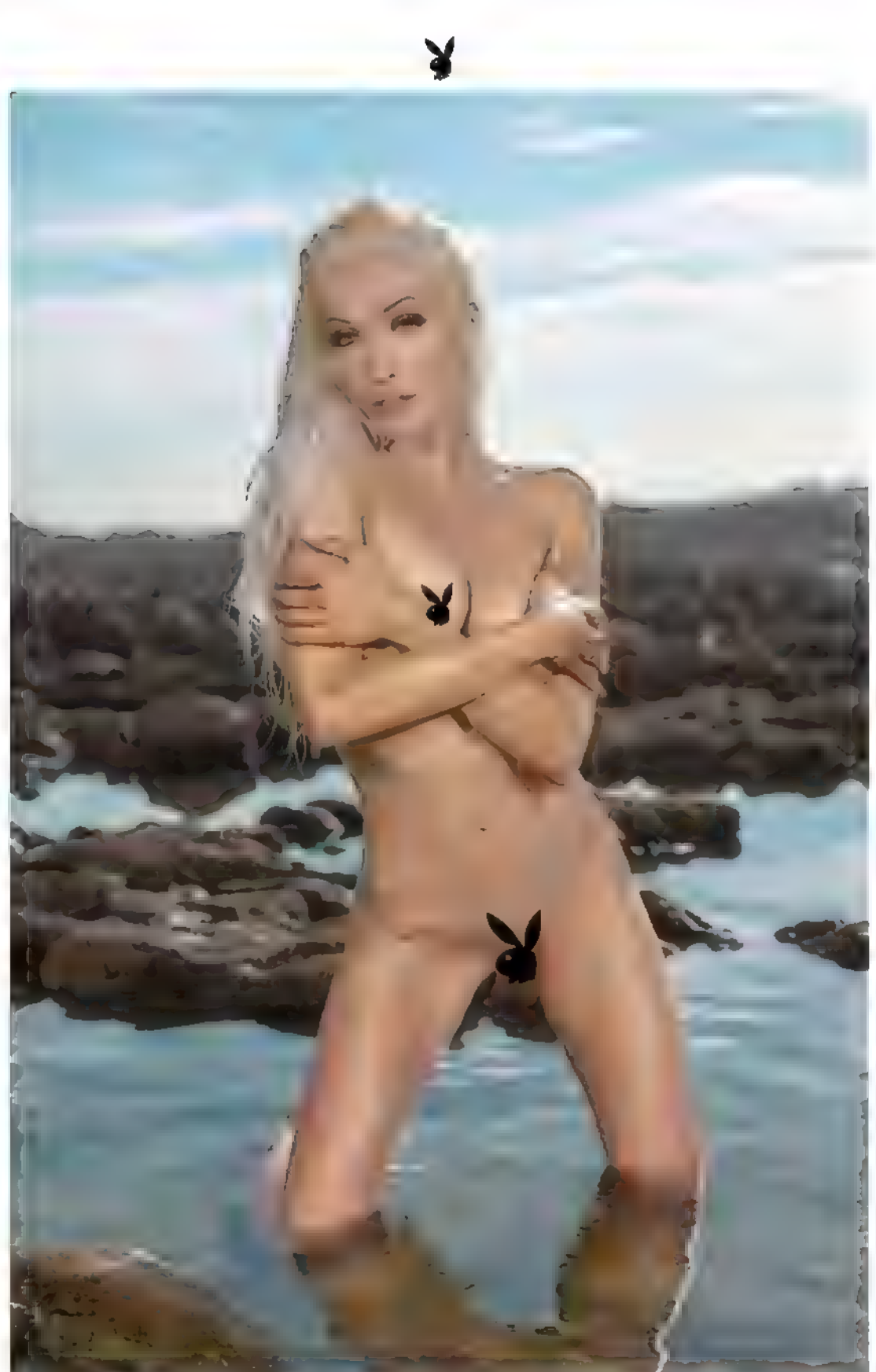
Which world capital would you most like to visit, and why?
 I would have to say Germany. I would love to see the land of my heritage

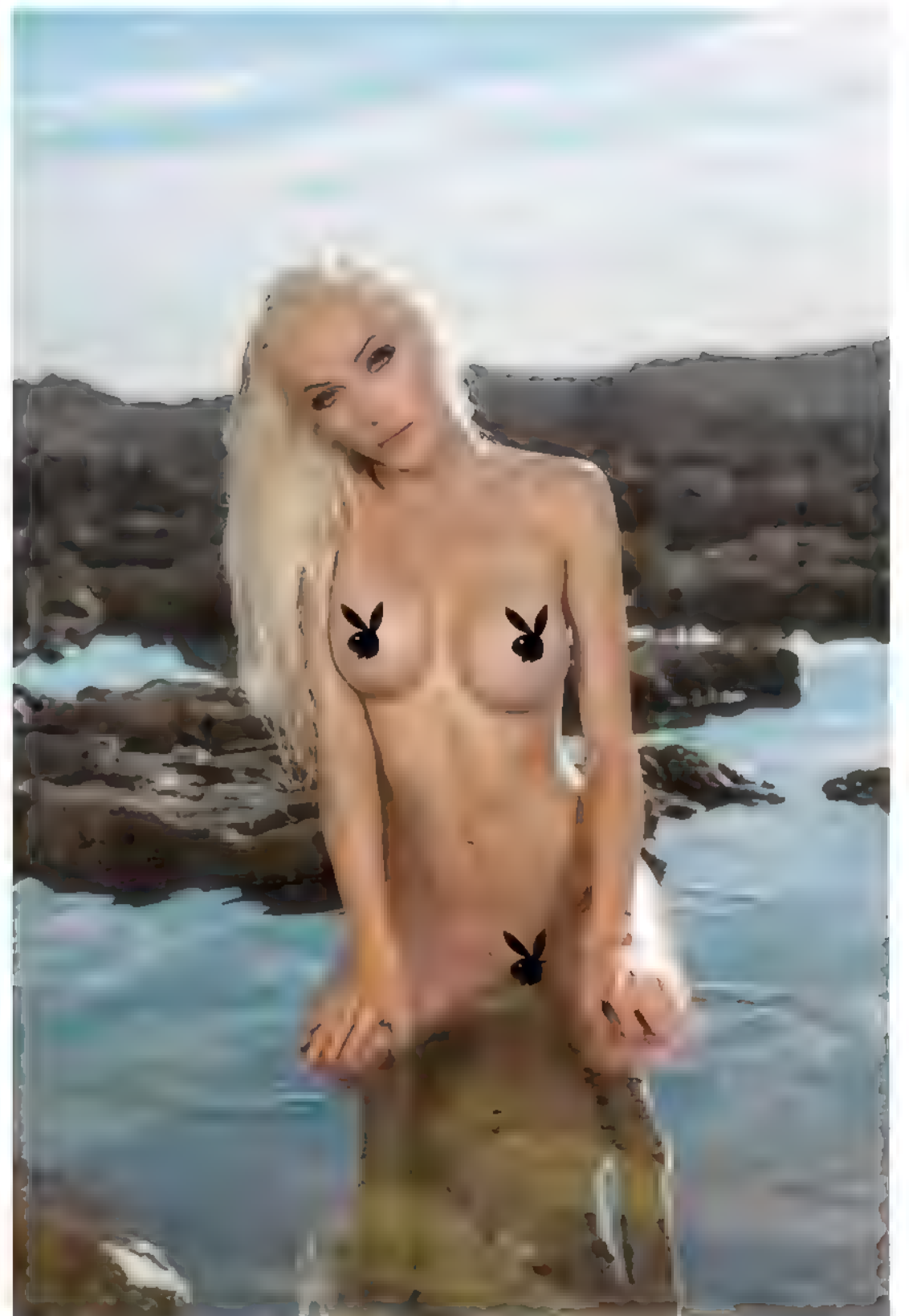
What is your mantra?
 Elegance is not about being noticed, it's about being remembered. Giorgio Armani



"Everyone is always so surprised when they hear me talking about engines or cutting dirt with a bulldozer"







Love

in many pieces



THOUGH
SODDENLY SO HOT? ARIANNE COHEN

Last year, Dani and Robert, both age 33, split after 14 years together. To many, they appeared to be typical high school sweethearts who had grown apart. This was not the case. For some time Dani had felt attracted to women. She began to crave new sexual experiences. So five years ago, Dani and Robert opened up their marriage.

First came brief stints on dating apps, which were quickly abandoned for the decidedly less turbid milieu of their friends group. Dani dated an acquaintance; they swung with another couple; that foursome eventually became a triad. And then a mutual friend rented the spare bedroom in their house. When he overstayed and began a fling with Dani, Robert wasn't happy with the situation.

"I thought it was jealousy, that he didn't trust men," Dani tells me. "I was more and more liking the philosophy of polyamory and feeling polyamorous, and it was not working for me to have this blanket limitation."

Dani eventually moved out.

I first heard about their split through office gossip. Dani's desk sits near mine at the Portland, Oregon co-working space we both frequent. We chatted benignly about her breakup one day over lunch, the way she told it. I assumed hers to be your standard monogamous marriage heading for divorce. There was no indication she and her husband had been polyamorous, engaging consensually in multiple romantic relationships. I learned that detail months later via — you guessed it — office gossip.

The thing you should know about me is that I've edited hundreds of *New York* magazine's "Sex Diaries," a series of weekly logs detailing people's sex lives in which extramarital partners routinely pop up. I've written widely on relationships, cavorted within Manhattan's sex-positive, poly and porn scenes, and have been in both monogamous and nonmonogamous relationships. So I may qualify as one of the world's superior lunchtime gab partners on the topic.

But Dani didn't openly advertise her nonmonogamy to her co-workers, her neighbors or me. And neither do I. If you haven't bedded or googled me, you wouldn't know my relationship history. This, in a nutshell, summarizes the state of open relationships in 2019. Utterly prevalent. Vehemently unadvertised.

...

According to a 2016 survey published in the *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, one in five single American adults has been in a nonmonogamous relationship. Approximately five percent of people in relationships are consensually nonmonogamous at any time, excluding the additional percentage that is cheating. This means at least one person you know — a co-worker, friend or relative — has fucked multiple humans while in a relationship and with their partner's permission. In many queer circles, consensual nonmonogamy has become so standard it may be discussed before dating or even meeting, in the form of disclaimers on online dating profiles.

Despite the one in five statistic, media and mainstream culture have watered down consensual nonmonogamy, commonly portraying it as an accidental threesome and minimizing how nuanced these arrangements actually are. One popular instance operates under the X.M.I.e Rule: "Sweetie, it's okay if you hook up on the road, but don't bring it home." Even more prominent (based on my experience) is the Monogamy Except... Rule.

"Honey, you can occasionally go to that bathhouse (or dominatrix or BDSM club), but otherwise we are monogamous." The most specific form of nonmonogamy may be practiced by asexuals — comprising as much as one percent of the population—who partake so their sexual partners' desires can be fulfilled.

You can be "monogam.sb" (mostly monogamous with occasional



Internet groups led to “coherent identities and more shared understandings of how to do open nonmonogamy.”

have yet to jump onboard.) In 2017, *The New York Times Magazine* asked, “Is an Open Marriage a Happier Marriage?” and in December 2018, *Quartz* ran an article longer than this one headlined POLYAMOROUS SEX IS THE MOST QUIETLY REVOLUTIONARY POLITICAL WEAPON IN THE UNITED STATES.

It’s not just a possible explanation for the extravagant headline may be that polyamory requires rigorous conversations about consent. As we know, consent is reshaping our legal, media and social landscapes. Previously, states legislated certain sex acts, relationships and marriages; before that, religious codes or childbearing needs sanctioned them. Today our laws protect sex as something practiced between consenting adults. #MeToo has expanded the notion of consent into enthusiastic consent — the idea that a partner should not only agree but be thrilled about it.

This is all to say that today’s culture is enamored with conversations about consent and relationships, and polyamory involves both. Thus polyamory has become increasingly visible — but not necessarily in a comprehensive way. What we’re seeing is just part of the story.

...

To understand why as a culture we’re so curious about open relationships, you need to know how we got here. The history of nonmonogamy is exceedingly checkered. Though the word *polyamory* originated only 27 years ago according to *Merriam Webster*, we can safely date the practice to at least the 1800s.

The 2010 book *Sex at Dawn*, popular among nonmonogamists, includes examples of ancient and tribal non monogamy, but that history doesn’t sit well with many anthropologists who argue that some of those scenarios were less than consensual, particularly for women, and dovetailed with practices such as pedophilia. In the Victorian era, nonmonogamy popped up among groups resisting religion or the state. Mormonism was founded in 1830, and free love groups, including upstate New York’s Oneida Community, which practiced communalism, prospered in the mid 1800s. Outside of Mormonism, though, none reached the popular consciousness as anything beyond scandal and oddity.

Around the same time, Western culture began to associate nonmonogamy with racial stereotypes: the Oriental concubine, the Muslim sheik with many wives, the African American male and his unstoppable libido. White women and the middle class were portrayed as boring and uptight.

The next century presents a cycle of nonmonogamy squeaking into popular consciousness, only to be overshadowed by international events and shifts in cultural mores. In the 1920s, free love movements flared among flappers owning their sexuality, but the Great Depression snuffed out sexual

expression. As newspapers depicted starving families and death through World War II, sexual freedom seemed frivolous. Post war America, of course, marked another era of sexual repression.

By the 1960s and 1970s, swinging became prevalent enough to serve as a plotline in the 1969 Natalie Wood vehicle *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*, which finished as one of the year’s highest-grossing films. Although swinging is now remembered as sex parties for multiple couples, it once involved highly organized communities that emerged only when women became aware of their right to pleasure — and their right to leave. “Swinging was a way to save the couple,” says Pascal. “It came with rules so the husband and wife wouldn’t develop relationships with anyone else. It allowed the woman just enough freedom so the couple wouldn’t fall apart.”

Swinging vanished in the face of 1980s conservatism. The Reagan administration hawked family values, with the president letting us know that “all great change in America begins at the dinner table.”

In 1981, U.S. hospitals began reporting cases of terminally ill gay men. Overnight, public interest in nonmonogamy flamed. Communities tunneled underground as the public began to blame the sexually adventurous for the AIDS crisis. (As we now know, closed-circle nonmonogamy poses no greater risk than monogamy of sexually transmitted infections. Terri Conley, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, says research indicates that most STIs come from close partners, not casual ones, because the latter practice safer sex.) As panic spread, many non monogamists either went monogamous or mute, making it difficult for newcomers to find like-minded people.

For this reason, little has been reported on the non monogamous culture of the 1980s. As 52-year-old Carlos Peñaranda remembers of the response to the AIDS epidemic within the gay community, “Nonmonogamy was generally not announced because of that whole stigma of slut shaming and ‘Oh, you’re sleeping around, so you’re just asking to get STDs and AIDS.’”

Many sex researchers lost funding as attention turned to HIV and AIDS and the intimate relations of gay men. Bisexual men also came under scrutiny out of concern they could spread HIV to unknowing wives. Gay male relationships shifted profoundly, now needing to mediate caretaking with romance and familial bonding.

Meanwhile, straight nonmonogamy remained nearly absent from mainstream arenas, social or academic. “Sexuality studies in general experienced a significant chilling with the George H. W. Bush administration,” says sociologist Eli Sheff, an educational consultant and respected pioneer in polyamory research. “They very much wanted to fund Christian things, so even AIDS

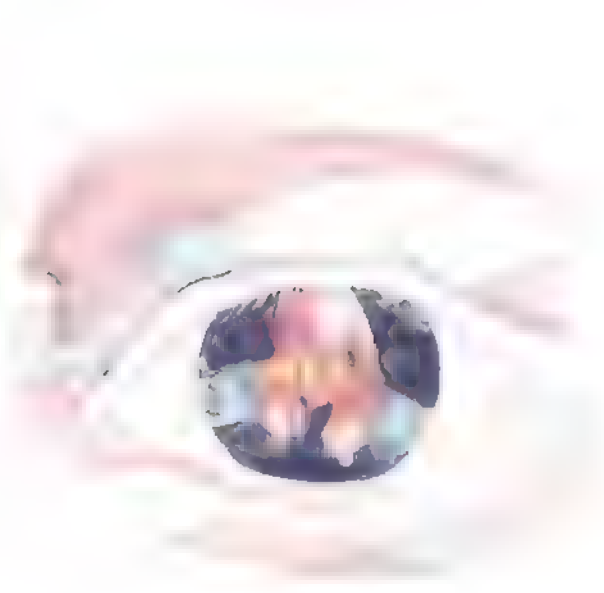
excursions), “hierarchical” (maintaining primary and secondary partners) or “polyfidelitous” (faithful to more than one partner). Some lifestyles coalesce around shared responsibilities of the household, kids or caretaking; others around sex. But despite or because of nonmonogamy’s current hotness — in the pages of this magazine, Ezra Miller announced he’s polyamorous, and Scarlett Johansson proclaimed, “I don’t think it’s natural to be a monogamous person” — the lifestyle has been reduced to something kinky, easily attainable or unstructured.

Lital Pascal, a doctoral candidate at Northwestern University, researches media representations of nonmonogamy. “The media is hypnotized by polyamory,” she tells me. “It’s interesting how everyone is trying to sell you the same story: attractive white heterosexual couples, or even families, practicing polyamory as some naughty thing done on the side. In reality, it’s ethical, and partners are respectful of one another.”

Pascal points to an episode of Netflix’s *Easy* in which Orlando Bloom and Malm Akerman, playing a couple trying to spice things up, pursue a threesome. “It’s just a tool to make this couple more couple-y than ever,” she says. In other words, *Easy* makes nonmonogamy look palatable because it’s presented as being just like monogamy but with better sex.

Polyamory has similarly popped up as a plot device on *House of Cards*, *Transparent*, *I Love Dick* and *The Magicians*. *Insecure* and *She’s Gotta Have It* explore polyamory from black perspectives. TLC’s reality show *Say Yes to the Dress* recently featured a triad, and some argue that *The Bachelor*’s success is based on a subconscious embrace of open relationships. There are at least a dozen podcasts devoted to the topic. In 2015, poly dating app Feeld, originally called 3nder, launched in the United States, a year later, OkCupid added an “Open to Non-Monogamy” option. (Tinder and Bumble, the leading heterosexual dating apps,

Dani had entered polyamory expecting it to be about fucking.



research was out of vogue, and sex positivity was not going to fly.” (Not that things are dramatically better now. In 2011, Sheff’s own career became a cautionary tale when she was denied tenure at Georgia State University because of her lack of grant funding; she has been a visiting professor ever since.)

A well known, large scale survey of U.S. sexual behaviors, *The Social Organization of Sexuality*, by sociologists at the University of Chicago, launched with the hope of support from the National Institutes of Health, but the U.S. Senate, led by conservative stalwart Jesse Helms, denied funding. Named a *New York Times Book Review* “notable book of the year” upon its eventual release in 1994, the book of the same name is still illuminating. Religious people had just as many recent sex partners as the nonreligious, and people in conservative areas had the same transgressive urges as everyone else, though they were less likely to act on them.

This brings us to the first known uses of the word *polyamory*. The earliest may be in a 1990 essay called “A Bouquet of Lovers, Strategies for Responsible Open Relationships” by Morning Glory Zell-Ravenheart. An online forum called alt.polyamory appeared in 1992. In person meet ups, such as the Loving More Conference, followed, spurring a new wave of community. As with other marginal groups, the internet allowed people to connect, and polyamory thrived.

The Ethical Slut, a 1997 book that describes how to be caringly promiscuous, became a bible of sorts. Meg John Barker, a longtime researcher on nonmonogamy and a senior lecturer in psychology at the U.K.’s Open University, says such codifying books and internet groups led to “coherent identities and more shared understandings of how to do open nonmonogamy, with practices becoming more nuanced, sophisticated and diverse.” The Polyamory Leadership Network, “a loose association” of about 180 activists, launched online in 2008 and has since created an “accountability pod,” to collect stories of problematic behavior, and a “survivor support pod,” focused on victims.

In short, communities helped polyamory develop a lexicon. Smart people once again began to keep tabs, legitimizing the lifestyle. The first European conference devoted to non monogamy, the International Conference on Polyamory and Mono Normativity, convened in 2005. Universities began to extend funding again. Conley says she told faculty interviewers at the University of Michigan that her research was “not really fundable, so if I need big grants to get tenure, we can all just go home.” They hired her. She’s now among

the top researchers in the field.

After leaving Robert, Dani moved into her own apartment and studied *More Than Two: A Practical Guide to Ethical Polyamory*, a popular read among newcomers. She wishes she had consulted it earlier. While most polyamory beginners hurt people accidentally, she found herself bewildered by a larger shift in her identity. “It was confusing for me, because while I wanted to open up romantic relationships, I realized I also wanted to just be more physical, like with friends. Sitting closely or having our arms around each other or even holding hands. I wanted to be more warm,” she says.

Dani had entered polyamory expecting it to be about fucking but found a new way of thinking altogether: primarily, that relationships can be fluid. This made her reassess the boundaries around her other relationships. She became poly solo, a term for dating multiple lovers while maintaining one’s own finances and home. Her new girlfriend “took to polyamory like water,” she says.

Some forms of nonmonogamy have better odds of success than others. Conley’s studies show that swinging and polyamorous relationships do “just as well or better” than monogamous relationships in categories including trust, overall satisfaction, commitment, satisfaction with last encounter and rate of orgasm. But when Conley asked a group of her graduate students whether everyone should practice consensual nonmonogamy, the answer was a unanimous no. “They had read the research,” she says. To sum up, dating and sex take time and emotional energy — a lot of emotional energy — and intensive processing. “It’s perfectly reasonable that most people would be monogamous in our current societal structure. It’s a lot simpler to navigate life,” she says. Allow me to add another downside: Polyamory’s emphasis on meeting one’s own needs can translate into narcissism.

Dani discovered the complexities of nonmonogamy experientially. After seven months apart, she and Robert reconciled. They now keep separate homes and identify as polyamorous.

For most straight younger people today, the popular form of nonmonogamy is nonhierarchical polyamory, according to *More Than Two*. (At 496 pages, the book is far from comprehensive: “We didn’t include things like what to do if a partner breaks an agreement,” co-author Franklin Veaux says.) Different from the stability of “anchor partners,” the cornerstone of nonhierarchical polyamory

is egalitarianism. A partner of 20 years, for example, does not outrank a new flame. This scenario is the antithesis of arrangements in which primary partners have veto power over other partners.

Gay men tend to distinguish sexual partners from romantic ones. Peñaranda and his husband, Daniel Leyva, decided to open their relationship after six years of monogamy. Leyva is 17 years Peñaranda’s junior; this marriage is his first gay relationship. Peñaranda, who had always practiced monogamy, was not initially thrilled about the prospect of opening up. “I had gotten hurt a number of times with guys stepping out on me when we were supposed to have a monogamous relationship, and I didn’t want that to be the case here,” he says. “But Daniel is young. He wanted to experience things.”

Note that Peñaranda’s decision was based not on promiscuity but on preserving his relationship. That was also the case for Dani and Robert. Nevertheless, jealousy often arises.

“We laid down some ground rules,” Peñaranda says. “We always have to be honest with each other and put each other first. No romantic dates. We’re each other’s number ones. There have been a few times we’ve said, ‘I’m not exactly feeling like number one right now,’ and we backtrack and fix it.”

Peñaranda and Leyva got prescriptions for Truvada, a preexposure prophylaxis (or PrEP) that reduces the risk of HIV transmission. The rise of PrEP (which can be prescribed across the gender spectrum) has allowed gay men to have more casual sex, though gay and bisexual men on PrEP are 72 percent more likely to get STIs than gay and bi men not on the medication, according to a 2018 study published in the journal *AIDS*. When it comes to STIs, volume matters. Having unprotected sex with more than five partners a year increases STI risk significantly.

Like Dani and Robert, Peñaranda and Leyva began their open relationship by using dating apps, which procured them a group of friends with benefits. “We go to pool parties and stuff that are not called sex parties, but sex happens there. They always have a play area,” Peñaranda says. As often happens in open relationships involving well-known play partners or people with whom one has sexual relations often — the rules slowly began to lift. The limitations Peñaranda gave Leyva regarding certain sex acts disappeared. “Now he can go have whatever fun he wants,” Peñaranda says nonchalantly.

Yet gay nonmonogamy, like straight nonmonogamy, continues to be an open secret, even with more of the

population participating. (A 2016 U.K. survey by gay men’s health charity GMFA reported more than 40 percent of its 1,006 gay respondents had been in an open relationship.) “Even now I don’t go, ‘Hi, I’m in an open relationship,’” says Peñaranda. “I’m very protective of Daniel and of our lives, so I pick and choose who I let know.”

As director of prevention research at the Ontario HIV Treatment Network, Barry Adam has “interviewed sizable numbers of couples who, it turns out, have other partners — a third person or individual additional partners.” But, he says, “even within those communities, there isn’t much talk about it.” He suggests the cultural adoption of gay marriage may have stymied frank conversations, because society presumed gay marriages were monogamous, as that’s the presumption built into heterosexual marriages. “This creates a public silence about what’s really going on,” Adam says.

“The public version is different than the practice.”

Despite increasing interest, polyamory is far from accepted. Polyamorists can be fired by companies with morality clauses. “There are very few legal protections for openly nonmonogamous people, or ways of having their relationships recognized,” says Barker. Even Sneff, who writes a column for *Psychology Today* called “The Polyamorists Next Door” and who does not identify as polyamorous, has faced professional blowback regarding her polyamory research. “I’ve had quite a few people question my science in a very aggressive way. It’s as though they feel personally attacked. Maybe their dad cheated on their mom, or they’re cheating right now and have personal issues around it.”

Amy Moors, an assistant professor of psychology at Chapman University, studied Google searches from 2006 to 2015. She found that searches for polyamory have increased significantly since 2011. Barring an international crisis, we can expect nonmonogamy to continue to evolve — and be fetishized — though it’s far from being widely embraced. Generation Z likely won’t adopt it as a dominant lifestyle choice (the way putting off marriage is now popular among millennials, for example), but the next wave in the dating pool — Generation Alpha — may be willing to consider more relationship varieties en masse. As research indicates, monogamy doesn’t work for everyone, nor does it work all the time. At minimum, a seat at the table for consensual non monogamy raises the possibility of gabbing about it with co-workers at lunch. Maybe then we’ll all finally start talking about it together. ■





COLLEEN ELIZABETH

Photography by **BRIAN CARDENAS**







Describe yourself in three words
 Hard worker, sweet, ambitious

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
 Very much so! I've loved the brand with how they celebrate the female form and able to capture the essence of everyone's beauty. The US version actually gave me the confidence to go into modeling since that was my first break in college modeling wise.

What was it like starting out as a model?
 So scary and I had no idea where to start. I'm not the typical 5'10" woman that the modeling industry drools over. I've always been petite but curvy and so it was hard finding jobs in the beginning because a lot of agencies turn down anyone below certain height requirements.

What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far?
 Sometimes it's hard saying no. I do all my bookings and have always tried to keep my word when a shoot has been set in place. I tend to have bad luck that something else will turn up when I have work planned but when I commit to something I go through with it. Word of mouth is key in the business and I always want photographers/companies to know I stick to my word. I have only missed one shoot and that was due to a flat tire.

Describe your perfect day off when you are not modeling?
 Usually try to work out 6 times a week so I get a good sweat in to start the day. Play with my two dogs by going on a long walk, throw on a bikini, then go relax with friends on a boat while we listen to old rock and have some cocktails until the sun goes down.

Do you feel more like a city person or a country person?
 Consider myself an adventure person haha. Love visiting new cities- food, history, culture and people but also love going to quaint little towns with friends and loved ones and making own memories. The off-beaten paths can lead to crazy experiences too!

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?
 I would love to live in Italy for a short stint. I thought I would travel abroad during college and spend time there but finances didn't line up to do so. Always been fascinated with the landscape, art, and of course the vino!

Do you have a secret talent?
 Used to draw growing up and trying to get back into it. Mostly portraits and animals with charcoal and pencil. Still need to frame a lot of my older work but it's very relaxing when I do a piece.





A guilty pleasure?

I hate admitting to it but I watch the Bachelor series. I would never go on a dating show because I am private about my personal life so it's fun to laugh at the scenarios the contestants go thru and how emotional it is for them in such a short time frame.

Which song is absolutely certain to make you cry whenever you hear it?

Ave Maria. I'm a mess whenever I hear it because my grandmother would sing it and play it on the piano. She later had Alzheimer's disease and could still play it by memory even when she had lost the ability to speak. So now every time I hear that song it reminds me of her.

What is your favourite word in any language and what does it mean?

Principessa. Means princess in Italian and a ways fun to say. One of my favorite movies is 'Life is Beautiful' and the main character calls his love Principessa in it.

Any last words you would like to share with the readers?

Wanted to say thank-you to Playboy South Africa, the readers and fans because without all of you I wouldn't be able to do what I love. Besos!



FRANK GRILLO

FIGHTER, FATHER AND FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH:
WHY THE HOLLYWOOD HEAVYWEIGHT IS JUST GETTING STARTED

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RYAN PFLUGER

STORY BY GIL MACIAS

STYLING BY ANNIE & HANNAH

Sundown in Los Angeles. A battered maroon Buick is parked near a rocky, industrial train yard. Showing off his physique through a tight white tee and \$500 jeans, Frank Grillo emerges from a photo studio, his hair perfectly coiffed. Fake abrasions rough up the contours of his face. He's holding a pink cocktail. Everyone notices.

Hopping onto the roof of the car, Grillo thrusts himself into an action hero pose. This comes naturally to him. For a moment it looks as though he's about to hurl a battle cry into the night sky. Instead, he launches into song. "It's raining men! / Hallelujah! / It's raining men!"

"Do it again!" a crew member encourages.

"Fuck no!" Grillo replies, grinning. The crew bursts into laughter.

This is my first glimpse of the martial arts enthusiast who has become one of Hollywood's most dependable and in-demand action stars. The actor has been the muscle in such films as *Warrior*, *The Grey*, *Zero Dark Thirty*, *End of Watch* and two *Purge* outings, as well as on television in *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, *Prison Break* and *Kingdom*. He stars in the highest-grossing film ever released in China, *Wolf Warrior 2*, and this spring he'll briefly reprise his role as Crossbones in *Avengers: Endgame*, a tentpole blockbuster that, among Grillo's credits, follows the bare-knuckle fighting indie thriller *Donnybrook*, in which he plays in his own words "pure fucking evil."

If we're to trust IMDb, Grillo is currently attached to no fewer than nine films, at least five of them expected this year. But his Netflix docuseries, *Fightworld*, released in October, maybe his most compelling work to date. In the five-episode study of fighting cultures around the world, viewers see another side of Grillo, his temperament far from that of the brawny tough-guy filmmakers hire him to be. Although he occasionally spars with the series' fighters to absorb their styles, Grillo spends most of his screen time observing both male and female athletes. Overall, *Fightworld* is an exploration of masculinity and strength at their most controlled and recognizable.

Over drinks in downtown Los Angeles after his shoot, the actor reflects on channeling a *Fight Club*-inspired sex symbol for PLAYBOY, of all publications. "I love going outside my comfort zone, and the shit we did today was wacky," he says. "You know, I like that. It's all good. I'll tell you what: Getting older and doing a lot of work on myself, and watching my kids grow up and becoming more well-rounded human beings, I don't judge things anymore. I don't judge myself. I don't judge other people, because everybody's on this journey."

Grillo, who turns 54 this June, says he "coasted" through the midlife crisis of entering his 50s. He gives Liam Neeson credit for "clearing the path for the older action hero," but Grillo's physicality is all his own. "Every weekend, I get on my dirt bike. I go into the mountains. I ride like I did when I was 25," he says. "I'm in the gym every fucking day. Until my body shuts down, I am what I am."

That declaration leads me to ask about his on-set drink choice. It turns out the mystery pink tippie was Whispering Angel rosé—not exactly the juice one would expect a brooding Bronx-born actor to order. But what's considered masculine these days, anyway? Grillo recognizes it as a point of contention in this cultural moment, and he doesn't shy away from addressing it. "I drink rosé all the time," he says matter-of-factly. "I get facials; I drink rosé. I need balance. What am I going to do, walk around with boxing gloves around my neck?"

A regular at L.A.'s boxing gyms, Grillo put his love for fighting to use on *Kingdom*, DirecTV's MMA series that ran from 2014 to 2017 and co-starred Nick Jonas as Grillo's closeted son. In the penultimate episode, Jonas's character comes out to his father, which leads to tragedy. Sexual orientation isn't a talking point on *Fightworld*, and in the real world openly gay male MMA fighters remain scarce. I ask Grillo whether MMA should be more welcoming of LGBTQ people and if he encountered any closeted fighters while filming *Fightworld*. "I don't think we're at that place yet, which is unfortunate," he says. "There might be a few,

WHITE T-SHIRT BY KELLY COLE; VINTAGE GOLD CHAIN, VINTAGE GOLD BRASS KNUCKLES



but it's still a hypermasculine, hyper-macho thing. I'm sure there are more than we know of. It's not something anybody walks around waving the flag for, you know?"

Grillo recognizes the necessity of visibility, however. He says he lost a friend to AIDS, and he has always been surrounded by gay men in his personal life. "My kids' godfather is gay. My favorite couples that my wife and I go out with are gay guys. They've been friends of ours forever. They have kids; we have kids. I've had friends come out early in their lives; I've had friends come out after they were married." He goes on: "I have three sons. If any one of them told me they were gay, I would be like, 'Good, that's great. Okay, you're gay. Big fucking deal.' Like that shouldn't even be an issue. That's like saying 'I'm Italian' or 'I'm Irish.' Even my *goomba* father, who's now 75 years old, loves my gay friends, and my gay friends love him, you know what I mean?"

It may be surprising to hear Grillo speak so forcefully in support of a group not his own, but should it be? The actor time and again has shown he can break out of any box his résumé may suggest. Over a two-hour conversation, he tackles more topics than I could ask for: spirituality, transgender rights, his disdain for Trump. He's intentional in every move, every utterance — perhaps a trait he learned from fighting.

Given how ingrained fight culture is in Grillo's life, I'm curious about how he approaches the sport with his children.

"I always tell my kids, 'Avoid violence, avoid confrontation,'" he says. "You don't want confrontation. What you want is the ability, if confronted with violence, to defend yourself."

Indeed, Grillo's most important role is that of father, and his three sons are no strangers to the boxing gym. During his *Fightworld* travels, he encountered many young fighters, some living in extreme poverty. The primary lesson he took from that experience was as a father. "Here's the deal about my kids," Grillo says. "They've been privileged. They've lived really good lives. It's what every parent wants to do for their kids: to make their lives better than my life was — and I had a shitty childhood. But one thing I instill in them is to understand the value of everything they have and to appreciate it."

He adds, "You must give some of what you have to other people; that's key. You must pay it forward all the time, even if you don't have a lot. If you continue to pay it forward, we raise better human beings."

Earlier, Grillo mentioned a need for balance in his life. He's an action star and a boxer, and he's raising three sons. His life seems filled with testosterone, and *rosé* only goes so far, right? Did he ever wish he'd had a daughter? He vigorously shakes his head.

"Look at me in the face," he says. "No. There's a famous saying: Have a boy, worry about one penis. Have a girl, worry about all the penises."

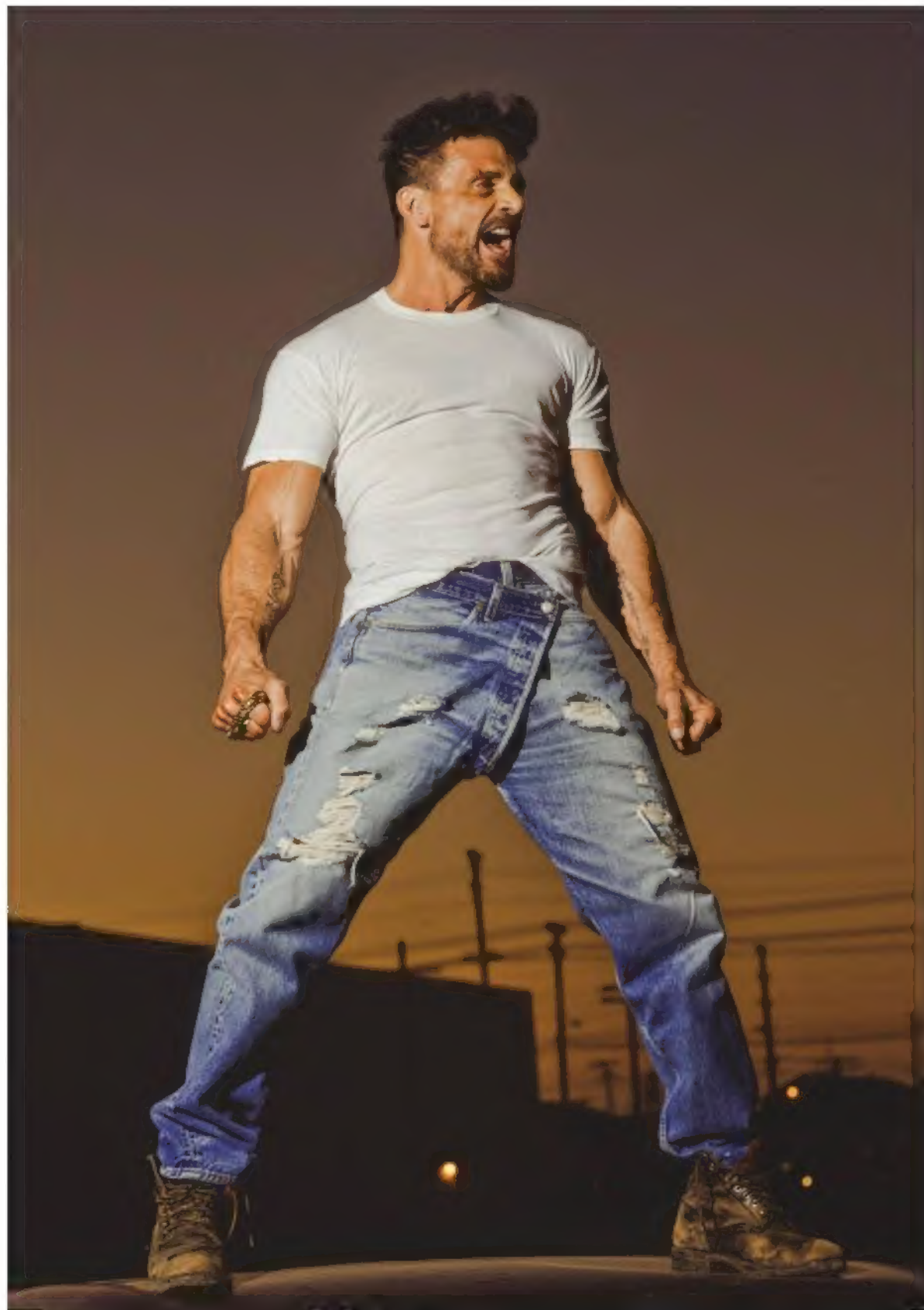
Although Netflix passed on a second season of *Fightworld*, there's no slowing down or hanging up the gloves for the actor who may yet become a Hollywood leading man in his 50s. "The martial artist Helio Gracie died at 95, rolling with his sons and his grandsons," Grillo says. "I'm not going to hang it up. I'll slow down. I'm not going to punch as fast — but it ain't happened yet."



VINTAGE LEATHER TRENCH, VINTAGE TANK TOP, NECKLACE BY GUCCI, RINGS BY M. COHEN, BELT BY SSS WORLD CORP., PANTS AND BOOTS GRILLO'S OWN







PREVIOUS SPREAD: VINTAGE BUTTON DOWN BY PLAYBOY, VINTAGE JEANS BY JEAN PAUL GAULTIER, RINGS AND BRACELET BY M. COHEN, SHOES BY SSS WORLD CORP.
THIS SPREAD: WHITE T-SHIRT BY KELLY COLE, JEANS BY R13, VINTAGE GOLD CHAIN, VINTAGE BRASS KNUCKLES, BOOTS GRILLO'S OWN



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